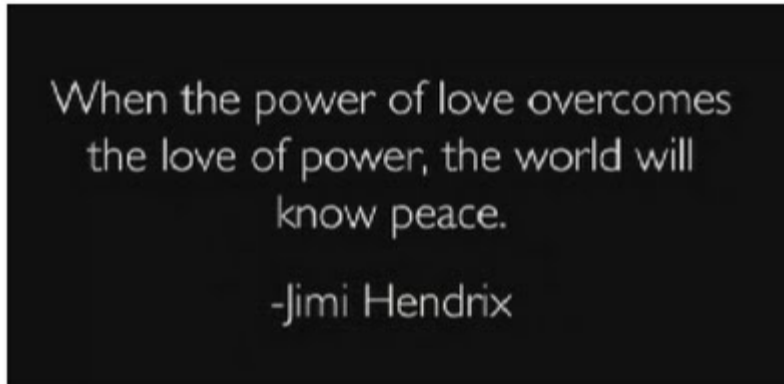


Mammon or Messiah research

Friday, July 22, 2011



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[Parsons/Makwana: The Silent Humanitarian Crises Beyond East Africa](#)

The international response to the East African crisis is far short of urgent needs, yet the extreme deprivation being reported is only the tip of the iceberg.

The Silent Humanitarian Crises Beyond East Africa

by Adam Parsons and Rajesh Makwana [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 22, 2011 | [CommonDreams](#) | [Dissident Voice](#) | [Share The World's Resource \(STWR\)](#)

The unfolding crisis in the Horn of Africa is yet another tragedy that reflects the dysfunction and injustice inherent in the structures of the world economy. Although the factors that are currently causing widespread hunger and deprivation across a large part of the region include the worst drought for 60 years, escalating food prices and continued regional conflict, the problem is largely man-made and entirely preventable if sufficient resources are redistributed to all people in need.

Around 10.7 million people already need urgent humanitarian assistance, while many thousands are fleeing a devastated Somalia each day to take refuge in makeshift camps across Ethiopia and Kenya. The United Nations has now officially declared two regions of southern Somalia to be in famine - a situation in which at least 20 percent of households face a complete lack of food and other basic necessities, and starvation, death and destitution are evident. As the Famine Early Warning Systems Network [makes clear](#) (pdf), the currently inadequate levels of humanitarian response are likely to see famine spread across all eight regions of southern Somalia within two months and could lead to "total livelihood/social collapse".

With food insecurity in the East African region remaining an ongoing concern for decades, many humanitarian agencies have been trying to draw attention to a potential famine in these countries for some time. The UN made an appeal for \$500m in 2010 to assist with food security, but managed to secure only half from donors. Consequently, hunger levels have rocketed over recent months, and in some areas the number of young children [suffering malnutrition](#) is now three times the normal emergency level. At least half a million children [risk death](#) if immediate help does not reach them, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The humanitarian coordinator for Somalia has also [described the lack of resources](#) as alarming, with insufficient donations of food, clean water, shelter and health services to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of Somalis in desperate need. The underlying problem is repeated by various aid organisations: that the international response is not commensurate with

the urgent requirements of those affected by the humanitarian catastrophe, and there is a lack of international support to address the deep-seated causes of the crisis or to mitigate future crises.

Yet the extreme deprivation being widely reported across East African is just the tip of the iceberg. Needless impoverishment and death is an ongoing catastrophe that unfolds daily, largely without any attention from the world's media or the public. At least 41,000 people in the developing world continue to die each day from easily preventable diseases that barely occur in high-income countries, such as diarrhoea, malaria or nutritional deficiencies. Despite the scale of these preventable deaths - amounting to 15 million lives lost each year, half of which affect young children before their fifth birthday - there is no official recognition that such extreme deprivation should also be considered a humanitarian catastrophe and treated accordingly.

These shameful mortality rates occur as a result of the ongoing silent disaster of world poverty, which receives a similarly inadequate international response to the periodic famines or food crises in countries like Somalia. For over a decade, international efforts to reduce poverty have centred around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of globally agreed targets that are set to expire in 2015. Although the MDGs have done much to focus attention on global poverty, they are widely considered an insufficient and superficial approach to economic development and saving lives.

A deadly lack of ambition

The politically sensitive principles of equity and distributive justice that featured in the original [Millennium Declaration](#) have gradually faded from the official development discourse, accompanied by a deadly lack of ambition. Even if the MDG goal on halving rates of poverty is met, a staggering 882 million people will still be living in absolute poverty in 2015. In effect, the MDG's focus on merely reducing over time the number of people living below the threshold of human survival tacitly accepts the continuance of poverty-related deaths each day. Similarly, goals four and five commit to reduce maternal mortality by only three quarters by 2015, and under-five child mortality by two-thirds, which accepts not only a high number of preventable maternal and child deaths remaining at the end of the MDG period, but also many millions of such needless deaths in the interim.

In an interdependent and globalised world, there can be no meaningful process of development whilst so many people living in poverty die prematurely and unnecessarily. The impact on families, communities and economies are devastating, and preventing these deaths is an urgent moral necessity. Even in the crudest economic calculations, putting an end to avoidable deaths would amount to a significant investment in human capital, as healthy individuals whose basic needs are secured are far more likely to contribute to the growth of communities and nations. It is objectionable from any social, moral or economic viewpoint that sufficient resources are not immediately made available to address the crises of extreme deprivation, especially in its most acute manifestation well before the situation degenerates into a full-blown famine.

International efforts to address the life-threatening poverty of millions of people in the poorest countries must aim far higher and provide much more than the current insufficient, voluntary and often conditional donations of overseas aid and disaster assistance. A massively upscaled redistribution of resources from North to South is essential to avert humanitarian disasters and prevent extreme deprivation and poverty-related deaths. Given the scale of these related crises, an international program of emergency relief must become the highest priority of world governments, followed by assistance for developing countries to secure ongoing state-provided welfare and essential services for all their citizens. Efforts to improve the redistribution of wealth nationally through the development of local industries, better taxation and the provision of comprehensive social protection for all people should become the new focus of international development policy.

Central to this transformation of development is the [principle of sharing](#), which embodies universally accepted ethical values that reflect our common humanity. Aligning the international policy discourse more closely to our shared moral obligations can help redeem decades of unjust economic and social policy, prevent future famines and help manifest an inclusive vision of progress and development. In the simplest economic terms, sharing points to the need for a redistribution of wealth from rich to poor, and a shift in power relations from financial and commercial interests to the world's majority population. The East African crisis presents another opportunity for civil society to demand that wealth

and resources are shared more equitably across the world, and that policy-makers prioritise the complete eradication of poverty above all other concerns.

Adam Parsons is the editor at Share The World's Resources, (STWR) a London-based NGO campaigning for essential resources - such as land, energy, water and the atmosphere - to be shared internationally and sustainably in order to secure basic human needs. He can be contacted at [adam\(at\)stwr.org](mailto:adam(at)stwr.org).

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Republican Lawmakers Tell the World Where to Go

by Jim Lobe [article link](#)

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Ensuring Fair Shares in a World of Limits

As worldwide demand increases for natural resources that are already in short supply, how should aid donors and campaigners respond?

by Alex Evans [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Thursday, July 21, 2011

Ralph Nader: Why Not Corporate Patriotism for a Change?

If companies are given American rights, they should have loyalty to this country too.

Why Not Corporate Patriotism for a Change?

by Ralph Nader [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 21, 2011 | CommonDreams | The Chicago Tribune

The fireworks and celebrations that mark Independence Day are over. But the need for a national conversation on corporate patriotism has never been more timely.

For more than 125 years the courts have been awarding corporations most of the constitutional rights possessed by human beings. Corporations — as artificial entities — now almost have rights equal to "We the people," even though the words "corporation" and "company" are not mentioned in the Constitution.

Under the current 5-4 conservative majority in the U.S. Supreme Court, "corporate personhood" is spreading. The Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission case allows unlimited independent corporate expenditures for or against any political candidates.

Since large corporations keep unleashing their corporate attorneys to push the domain of corporations as "persons," it is way overdue to judge them by the same yardsticks as we judge real persons.

U.S. corporations, chartered (born) in the U.S., rising to great size and profits because of American workers, saved or succored repeatedly by taxpayer subsidies and bailouts in Washington and state capitals, and sometimes rescued by U.S. Marines or protected by the U.S. fleets when they are in trouble abroad, owe the American people and our country some measure of loyalty and duty.

Instead of extending patriotic gratitude, large U.S. corporations increasingly are sending the opposite message. "We're outta here, with your jobs," their behavior says. Unfortunately, some CEOs appear to have no problem with dictatorial communist regimes like China or oligarchies like Mexico that know how to oppress impoverished workers. Workers in China cannot start independent unions or uniformly use independent courts to recognize their health, safety and economic rights.

Products from foreign sweatshops are exported back to the U.S. where abandoned factories and communities proliferate.

Corporations say they love their country, especially when it comes to manufacturing modern weapons systems for the Pentagon. So let's extend this love and see how they measure up patriotically.

Is it patriotic for drug companies to leave our country without any production facilities for ingredients used in penicillin and other key drugs because they have shipped production rapidly in the past decade to China and India which lack the inspection standards we have here? Leaving America defenseless and so dependent in this critical area is especially galling. Remember Big Pharma accepts billions in tax credits and valuable free research, development and clinical testing by the National Institutes of Health for many important pharmaceuticals.

Is it patriotic for CEOs to continue using public services and gobs of corporate welfare while they move their corporate headquarters to a small office in the Bahamas or other tax havens to escape paying their fair share to the Treasury? Such tax escapees burden ordinary taxpayers further.

Is it patriotic for CEOs to demand and use taxpayer dollars to facilitate moving abroad with their industries? The latest version of this lack of fealty is taking large federal subsidies for solar energy research and development and then moving the production facilities to China. Andrew Grove, former CEO of Intel, has written critically of this ominous, job-draining trend.

Is it patriotic for General Motors to be saved from bankruptcy by taxpayers and still keep billions in taxpayer-paid reserves and credits, yet lobby against the Obama administration's proposed overdue safety and fuel economy standards?

In 1996, I sent letters to the CEOs of the largest hundred U.S. chartered corporations, urging them at their annual shareholders meeting, in the name of their corporation (not their boards of directors or officers) to pledge allegiance to the flag.

For example, the CEOs would stand up, and on behalf of General Motors, DuPont, Exxon Mobil, Pfizer or Bank of America, "pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

The many responses were instructive. Only Federated Department Stores thought it was a good idea. The other companies either said that they would take the suggestion under advisement or they misinterpreted my letter as asking for pledges by corporate officials and shareholders, no matter what their nationality. Ford Motor Co. flatly declared "the concept of corporate allegiance is not workable." In high dudgeon, O. George Everbach wrote back declaring "Kimberly-Clark believes that it has an inalienable right to choose when, where and how it wishes to display its patriotism."

Well at least Kimberly-Clark recognized the concept. Now it is time for American workers and taxpayers to say to corporate America that companies can't always have it both ways — to receive all the benefits of American corporate personhood and avoid all the expectations of patriotic behavior and the responsibilities that go along with those privileges and immunities.

This is not a left-right divide. For as Pat Buchanan has said, if these U.S. corporations are not loyal to us, why should we be loyal to them?

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Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His most recent book - and first novel - is, [Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us](#). His most recent work of non-fiction is [The Seventeen Traditions](#).

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Wednesday, July 20, 2011

[Willie Osterweil: A Global Fight for Radical Democracy](#)

Yes We Camp: A Global Fight for Radical Democracy

by Willie Osterweil [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 19, 2011 | CommonDreams | Shareable

Millenials all over the world have received a brutal political education. The lucky few of us paid far more and will get far less for our college degrees than any generation before, we have watched with dismay as our parents squabble over light bulbs while the seas boil, and we have witnessed the steady erosion of public space, individual rights, the fourth estate, and checks on executive power. America has been at war for basically the entire adult lives of everyone under 30. The financial collapse of 2008 seemed to catch Baby Boomers by surprise, but for us, it was just another news story, a predictable event in a world spinning out of control. We have also grown up with racial and sexual tolerance as the norm (if not the rule), with communication and information constantly at our fingertips, and in a world where, though crises are shared globally, so is community.

We have seen the house of cards start to tremble, we have watched our future sold to the lowest bidder, and we see it happening everywhere at once.

Out of this potentially nihilistic morass a serious movement for change is emerging. Though it would be disingenuous to call it a youth movement – it's too big for that – Millenials have been at the vanguard in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, and Spain. We have developed new tactics, new ideologies, new ideas, and we've done it fast. Though strategies and expressions have varied to match cultural and national contexts, the movements share striking similarities. These movements have no leaders, no major political parties, no rigid ideologies and no demands beyond total, real, democracy.

“Yes We Camp,” one of the witty twitter hashtags of Spain's 15 May movement, sums things up well. Inspired by the Arab Spring, galvanized by crisis, unemployment and austerity, fed up with the ineffective, corrupt, and often misanthropic political process, we are leaving our homes and moving to the street. In a blend of last-chance desperation and optimistic empowerment, we are building autonomous, totally democratic camps in city centers across the world. In these camps total inclusive democracy is praxis, everything is shared, and we build revolutionary consciousness everyday.

Perhaps no country is better suited to the radical democratic camps than Spain. A relatively young democracy, Spain has a rich political history of autonomous revolt and a strong cultural tradition of shared outdoor space. With unemployment hovering around 25 percent, and youth unemployment above 40 percent, a decade long housing bubble as dramatic as that in the US, and a series of dramatic cuts to social services being pushed by the EU and the ‘socialist’ Zapatero government, Los Indignados have over 60 percent popular support. I've discussed the [history of the movement](#) and [life in the camps](#) for *Shareable* before, but I'd like to zero in on the political methods and practices I witnessed (and took part in, to a limited extent) in Barcelona's Placa Catalunya.

The camp is fundamentally organized around the principle of the General Assembly. If you've been in any kind of leftist meeting you have an idea of how it works: someone volunteers to be meeting facilitator, and people raise their hands to get on the ‘stack’. The facilitator calls on people in the order they volunteered, and only one person speaks at a time. They seek consensus rather than majority rule: all of the meetings I witnessed ended with dissenters agreeing to proposals and accepting the decision of the group. In a majority vote, voters are presented with a yes/no question and 51 percent carries the day, but in General Assembly proposals are built during conversation and debate, and as such actually reflect the desires of the group as a whole.

From the general assembly *Los Indignados* formed commissions, which focus on specific issues and questions within the camp, such as communication, international press, infrastructure, and food. These commissions set up their own booths and tents, where they work and remain available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to speak with the public walking through

the square. Commissions all have their own assemblies, following the same methods. As such, all actions, choices, and movements are formed from the bottom up, not the top down.

This means, of course, a lot of meetings: it can be boring, and slow, and sometimes frustrating. But everyone takes part in the decision process, and everyone's voice is listened to, not just heard. During a general assembly on Tuesday the 21st, a group of eleven and twelve year olds marched into the square chanting, to general applause. The assembly was paused to allow the kids to come up on stage and address the camp. What is lost in ideological rigidity you gain in respect, actualization, and consciousness. Democracy is messy, but efficiency is capitalism's catch-phrase.

Everything is shared: decision making, food, labor, information, experience, resources, cigarettes. Placa Catalunya has a free kitchen, daily teach-ins, meeting schedules, public art spaces, a play space for kids, free movie screenings, and much more.

The camps also serve as action and information centers: people form actions large and small from the centralized point, allowing for a fluidity and speed of organization unavailable to other forms of organization. It also allows for simple scalability of involvement: core revolutionaries sleep and live in the camp, some people spend a couple days a week there, others only show up for major protests. This improvisational form of occupation creates a strong but fluid movement open to all and run by the people.

This is a practice of total democracy, of real, revolutionary tolerance. Los Indignados are 100 percent against violence, but they define violence to include homelessness, unemployment, hate speech and other forms of injustice. To quote the popular chant: this is what democracy looks like!

Similarly organized camps can be found throughout Spain, in Athens, and of course Egypt and Tunisia. Smaller camps have been springing up all over the world: England, Iceland, Italy, and France, throughout South America, even some in Japan and South Korea.

They've been appearing here in the US too. After the people were kicked out of the capitol building in Madison, they spontaneously organized Walkerville, an anti-Walker camp and protest space. I am writing these words from Bloombergville, the New York City encampment built to fight Bloomberg's 2012 budget. A camp sprung up in San Jose this week, and Boston last week. A group called "[American Spring](#)" has planned camps for next month in Pheonix, San Fransisco, San Jose, and across the Southwest, and [a major anti-war encampment](#) is planned for Washington D.C, slated to start on October 6.

It's not clear whether all of these camps can succeed in their goals, but it is totally clear that this method is capable of transforming consciousness (particularly among millenials) and making a better future seem not only possible, but plausible. This is the new method of resistance, revolt and democracy developed by a generation with nothing to lose and everything to gain. We will be seeing many more of these camps before this crisis is over, and one may well be coming to your city. If it's not, get your friends together, find points of unity, and grab your sleeping bags.

Willie Osterweil is a writer and punk singer based in Brooklyn, NY. When he's not overseas taking part in revolutions, Willie edits the A/V section for [The New Inquiry](#) and fronts the band [Vulture Shit](#).

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Tuesday, July 19, 2011

Mary Bottari: ALEC Exposed

ALEC Exposed: Milton Friedman's Little Shop of Horrors

by Mary Bottari [article link](#) [Uprising Radio](#)

July 19, 2011 | CommonDreams | PRWatch | Uprising Radio

Although he passed away in 2006, states are now grappling with many of the toxic notions left behind by University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman.

In her groundbreaking book, [The Shock Doctrine](#), Naomi Klein coined the term "disaster capitalism" for the rapid-fire corporate re-engineering of societies still reeling from shock. The master of disaster? Privatization and free market guru Milton Friedman. Friedman advised governments in economic crisis to follow strict austerity measures, combining radical cuts in social services with the full-scale privatization of their more lucrative assets. Many countries in Latin America auctioned off everything standing -- from energy and water utilities to Social Security -- to for profit multinational firms, crushing unions and other dissenters along the way.

Now, U.S. states are in crisis. The 2008 Wall Street financial meltdown, caused by years of deregulation and lack of government oversight, cost Americans \$14 trillion in lost wealth and eight million lost jobs. Today some 25 million are unemployed or underemployed. This jobs crisis has tanked federal and state tax receipts, adding billions to state budget shortfalls.

As the prime movers of this deregulatory agenda, the GOP spin machine has launched into hyper-drive in an attempt to wash the blood from their hands. Governors across the nation, backed by Wall Street's Club for Growth and the Koch Brother's Americans for Prosperity, are working hard to convince average Americans that a jobs crisis is actually a deficit crisis and that the culprits are not the big banks on Wall Street, but state, county and municipal workers.

In lockstep, governors are reaching for an almost identical set of "solutions," to their financial woes: massive tax breaks for big corporations, constitutional amendments to prevent states from raising revenue, the slashing of critical public services, the busting of unions and the privatization of every possible aspect of government including public schools -- long a Friedman agenda item. (See the video [here](#).)

The similarity of these measures has not gone unnoticed, but now we have found the fountainhead of these radical measures: the American Legislative Exchange Council. (ALEC)

ALEC Exposed

This week the Center for Media and Democracy made available to the public over 800 ALEC "model" bills and resolutions on a new website, ALECexposed.org. We display the documents, crafted by corporations, and right-wing state legislators behind closed doors, so that citizens across the country can now trace the origins of many of the radical proposals moving in their states. (Our site contains lists of ALEC members, corporations, task forces, scholars, funders and more.)

Milton Friedman famously [said](#): "Only a crisis -- actual or perceived -- produces real changes. When the crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable." Think of ALEC as Milton Friedman's little shop of horrors where legislators across the country can easily access the "ideas laying around."

ALEC is not a lobby, and it is not a front group. It is much more powerful than that. Behind closed doors, corporations hand legislators the law changes they desire that directly benefit their bottom line. Corporations are "equal" members. They have their own corporate governing board which meets jointly with the legislative board. Corporations and trade groups fund almost all of ALEC's operations directly through hefty membership dues and indirectly through corporate foundations, like the Charles G. Koch Foundation.

Corporations, like Koch Industries, Phillip Morris, Reynolds, Kraft, Wal-Mart, Bayer, Coca Cola, State Farm and more, sit on ALEC task forces and vote with state legislators to approve "model" bills in secret. They wine and dine legislators at swank hotels, with child care provided, fundraisers and other perks pre-arranged. After a swell time, participating legislators -- overwhelmingly conservative Republicans -- bring the bills home and introduce them into statehouses across the land as their own brilliant ideas and important public policy innovations. ALEC cuts out the middleman and the state legislators themselves become "super lobbyists" for the ALEC agenda.

Disaster Capitalism in the States

In December of 2008, while the economy was shedding hundreds of thousands of jobs a month, one group was treating the catastrophe as a terrific opportunity. Governor Mitch Daniels reminded an ALEC gathering that the collapse of the U.S. economy was "a terrific time to shrink government!"

In 2010, Republicans won the governorship and control of both houses in 21 states. ALEC shock troops swung into high gear. In Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Maine a steady stream of bills emerged from Milton Friedman's shop.

Starving State Government of Revenue to Make It Dysfunctional and Despised: ALEC members are introducing hundreds of bills to grant tax breaks to big corporations and to cripple state's ability to raise revenue, including new constitutional rules to limiting state taxing powers. Grover Norquist would love these lethal proposals.

Privatizing Schools and Other Government Services: ALEC bills encompass over 20 years of effort to privatize public education through an ever-expanding school voucher system, to turn Medicare and Medicaid into voucher programs, and to privatize almost all aspects of government including toll roads and bridges, pensions, foster care and prisons. Foreign firms like Maquarie and Cintra, which are snapping up U.S. roads and bridges, are also using ALEC to push model bills.

Race to the Bottom in Wages for Americans: ALEC bills would repeal state or local laws that boost workers wages such as "living wage" and prevailing wage laws. ALEC bills call a starting minimum wage an "unfunded mandate" but think that prison labor is just terrific. ALEC also supports a radical "free trade" agenda that sends U.S. manufacturing and an increasing number of service-sector jobs overseas.

Defunding Traditional Supporters of the Democratic Party: ALEC purports to be nonpartisan, but only 1 of 104 legislators in ALEC's leadership is a Democrat. ALECexposed.org contains dozens of bills to defund public sector and private sector unions and to make it harder for trial lawyers to bring cases when consumers are injured or killed by dangerous products.

Help Needed!

ALEC's agenda is vast. These bills and many more are moving in all 50 states. We need your help! Visit ALECexposed.org today, see the corporations and legislators pursuing this agenda and help us track the bills moving in your state. Join the conversation on [Facebook](#) and Twitter at #ALECexposed and Take Action to tell the ALEC corporate cabal to "[Dump ALEC!](#)"

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Mary Bottari is the Director of the Center for Media and Democracy's [Real Economy Project](#) and editor of their www.BanksterUSA.org site.

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How to Liberate America from Wall Street Rule

How is it that our nation is awash in money, but too broke to provide jobs and services?

by David Korten [article link](#) [article link](#) [Uprising Radio](#)

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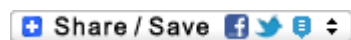
The Abundant Community;

John McKnight & Peter Block; Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods

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Monday, July 18, 2011

[Richard Clark: A Road to Serfdom](#)

Global Economic Crisis: The Ultimate Goal of the Bankster-led Political-economic Warfare Being Waged Against Us Is ... ?

by Richard Clark [article link](#)

July 14, 2011 | OpEdNews

As economist Michael Hudson [points out](#), the European debt crisis is really the product of financial warfare instigated by big banks. Yes, these banks are engaged in warfare against the rest of society. What's going on in Greece is exactly what's going to happen in America very shortly. Why? Because in every industrialized country, the big banks are in the process of offloading their bad debts onto governments. They are then forcing these governments to sell off national assets so that the bankers can be paid what they consider to be their due. (For more about this, see the linked video at [this](#) web site, about Greece being a dress rehearsal for the US.)

In a nutshell, what it says is that the world is being prepared for the kind of "neo-feudalism" that these banksters (intent on ever more completely becoming our masters and lords) intend to implement. And so it is that America is in the early stages of being subjected to the same type of [plundering](#) as Greece and Ireland.

As Hudson [explained](#) in 2008, what these banksters and their cohorts are really trying to do is to roll back the Enlightenment, roll back the moral philosophy and social values of classical political economy and its culmination in Progressive Era legislation, as well as the New Deal institutions that embody such legislation. They're not trying to make the economy more equal, and they're not trying to share power -- *just the opposite*: Their aim is to implement a kind of pre-industrial and even feudal socioeconomic system. What this means is that our economy is being pushed back and put on the road to debt peonage. Hence forth, most manufacturing will be done in Asia and Europe.

What we have here, therefore, is indeed a "Road to Serfdom." It is just the opposite of the government sponsorship of economic progress and rising living standards that we had until Reagan took the White House. Rather, it's the dismantling of democratic government and the dissolution of regulatory agencies, for the purpose of creating this new kind of neo-feudal system. (Don't miss Max Keiser's [discussion](#) of this neo-feudalism on the Keiser Report. Just scroll down until you see a picture of economist Michael Hudson on the linked video screen.)

If all this sounds far fetched, consider that Foreign Policy magazine recently ran an article entitled "[The Next Big Thing: Neomedievalism](#)," arguing that the power of nations is declining, and is being replaced by big banks and other corporations, wealthy individuals, the sovereign wealth funds of monarchs, and city-regions.

Also consider that many progressive economists are now telling us that the true purpose of the bank rescue plans is "a massive redistribution of wealth (concentrating ever more of it into the hands of) the bank shareholders and their top executives."

Finally, as the wholly non-partisan Australian economist Steve Keen observed:

"This is the biggest transfer of wealth in history," as the giant banks have handed off their toxic debts (stemming from fraudulent activities) to tax payers in their respective countries. These big banks created bubbles -- using fraud -- because that's the only way they could make the obscene profits they feel they now deserve. ([See this for details](#)). And be sure to not miss Max Keiser's interview of Steve Keen [here](#). (Just scroll down until you see Mr. Keen's picture on the linked video screen.)

Indeed, [this isn't the "Great Recession", it's the Great Bank Robbery](#). In simple language, the big banks have [pillaged](#) and [looted](#) the rest of the world, and now they are beginning to pillage and loot the USA. It is not only Greece that is losing its sovereignty; the big banks are in the process of [turning America into a banana republic](#) as well. Remember, the trillions in

bailouts [went to banks, not to Main Street](#), and [a large percentage of the bailouts](#) went to foreign banks (and [see this](#)). And so did [most of the money from the second round of quantitative easing](#).

In short, warfare initiated by the big banks has now gone global. As Warren Buffet, one of America's most successful capitalists and defenders of capitalism, has [pointed out](#), "There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's *making* that war." And winning it.

Let's not forget that it was *inequality that to a large extent* [caused the Great Depression and that has also caused the current economic crisis](#). Finally, let's not forget, either, that the father of modern economics, Adam Smith, [didn't believe](#) that inequality should be a taboo subject, and that even some conservatives, in addition to most liberals of course, are [against rampant inequality](#). In spite of this, however, polls show that the vast majority of Americans continue to greatly

underestimate the *amount* of inequality that has, in our country, over the past 30 years, been generated. Most remain largely unaware of the colossal crime that has been committed against them.

That lack of awareness we must bring to an end.

Richard Clark: Several years after receiving my M.A. in social science (interdisciplinary studies) I was an instructor at S.F. State University for a year, but then went back to designing automated machinery, and then tech writing, in Silicon Valley. I've always been more interested in political economics and what's going on behind the scenes in politics, than in mechanical engineering, and because of that I've rarely worked more than 8 months a year, devoting much of the rest of the year to reading and writing about that which interests me most. Web site <http://www.techeditingservices.com/>

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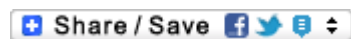
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Sunday, July 17, 2011

Bob Chapman: Financial Crimes on Wall Street and the Debt Crisis

Financial Crimes on Wall Street and the Debt Crisis

Crisis And Collapse Unfortunate but Inevitable

by Bob Chapman [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 16, 2011 | Global Research | International Forecaster

Crime on Wall Street, in banking and in corporate America pays. One just neither admits or denies and lets the corporate shareholders pay the fines. These are today's untouchable, who steal billions and get away with it. Financial institutions are too big to fail, as are their key employees.

To a great extent fraud and other criminal behavior caused the credit crisis and lack of recovery that we have witnessed over the last 5 years. We have had top officers of firms see their companies headed for trouble and with this inside knowledge they have cashed out their share holdings. Then there were the predatory lenders, syndicators of bonds, which contained mortgages, now known as toxic waste, that were criminally given AAA ratings when they deserved BBB. We had some 1,000 corporate officers who backdated their options. Only one was criminally prosecuted when they all should have been.

Prosecutions have come few and far between, because the SEC, CFTC and the Justice Department aid and abet these crooks in order to keep harmony in the system, which is coming unglued. They have always done this, but over the past 5 years even the uneducated can see what has and is taking place. In fact the more outrageous the crime, the less it is liable to be pursued. This non-pursuit of crime needless to say encourages more crime and further damages overall corporate and financial sectors. There is no accountability and we see none in the future. Let there be no mistake this financial crisis is worse than the last depression. This continuing degenerative process can only assist in a further degeneration of the system.

A bill has been introduced by Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the permanent subcommittee on investigations, that would change IRS regulations that allow American traders of credit default swaps to avoid paying federal taxes on transactions initiated in the US. It would tighten rules that enable some hedge funds and US corporations to reduce federal tax liabilities by declaring themselves foreign companies and moving a small part of their operations overseas. It would require companies to provide the SEC and the public, with a country-by-country breakdown of their sales, employment and operations.

Senator Levin says that abuse of offshore havens cost American taxpayers \$100 billion a year. Presently American transnational conglomerates have more than \$2 trillion stashed offshore waiting for another tax break like the one five years ago that allowed them to bring \$350 billion home at 5-1/4% instead of regular taxation of 35%. That works out to about \$600 billion lost to the Treasury. Gains from traders would be \$20 billion over ten years. The removal of these tax breaks would certainly help cut the budget deficit.

The crisis in Greece is finally causing contagion in Italy. The crisis of all six near bankrupt euro nations is upon us and it is permanent. Moody's just downgraded Ireland again, at the worst possible time. Spain, which is in terrible shape, will soon follow. The EU members and their controllers, the banks, keep trying to put band-aids on their festering problem. Sooner or later they will have to face the music and that is those six nations will all have to go bankrupt along with the banks. All of you subscribers in the EU and UK get your funds out of the bank, now, and into gold and silver coins. If you don't you may end up with nothing. If this goes on long enough it will take the presently solvent nations down as well.

The European Union and the euro zone were ill conceived and bound to failure. After having lived in Europe for years, and being able to speak several of their languages, you get to understand people and the way they think. Both entities were anthropologically unnatural. Europe is still tribal. Just look at countries like Germany, France and Belgium where people speak different variations of the same language. In Belgium they speak two distinct languages. The EU's major flaw was sovereign countries ran their own fiscal policies, as bureaucrats ran the EU. You have to either federalize all the way or forget it. The euro zone foisted one interest rate fits all, all on countries that should have never had the same interest rates as

say Germany. We talked about both these issues 14 years ago, but as usual, no one was listening. From the very beginning the EU and the euro zone were doomed. Both are going to now begin the process of disintegration, as both are a failure. The six countries will go bankrupt, as will the banks. That will dislodge England and push it into bankruptcy and that in turn will force the US to follow. That may be the catalyst that forces a meeting of all nations to revalue, devalue and multilaterally default, hopefully such a meeting will occur long before this stage is reached. There is no question now that the game is over. The question now is when?

Workers have become a form of inventory just like widgets. For years now companies have laid off and rehired workers at will, keeping the expensive worker participation to a minimum. If you use total figures and include discouraged workers the unemployed are 20.6 million, up 483,000 in June. We do not see stimulus 3 coming from Congress, so we expect unemployment to resume its relentless rise upward from 22.6%. Mind you unemployment reflects \$1.7 trillion in stimulus 1 and 2, and QE 1 and QE 2, which takes us well over 44 trillion. All those injections did was to bail out the financial sector and government. As we know our President tells us the administration created three million jobs, at a cost of \$266,000 per job. That is hardly something to write home about. Corporate America is in excellent financial shape, but they will be slow to hire until they see a firm recovery in place. Sure GE made \$17 million, because they did not pay taxes as we do, but they won't rush out to hire unless the reason to hire exists. The real opportunity to hire has to be with small business that hires 70% of Americans. They do not enjoy the tax-free status of GE. Most of these small companies are barely hanging on. These are the companies that banks won't loan too. Half of them are still experiencing falling profits, only 20% are doing well.

Year-on-year in the municipal sector 450,000 workers are going to lose their jobs, because many of these entities are close to broke. They and the states want more money from the federal government, which it doesn't have to give. Large, very profitable businesses generally create very few jobs. They and mid-sized companies are buying more and more labor saving equipment, or they are moving production offshore. For the last three years most of the new jobs paid subsistence wages. Those are \$8.00 to \$11.00 an hour jobs, which are really part-time providing a 34.3-hour week, as inflation roars ahead up 10.6% and headed up to 14% by yearend. The average duration of unemployment is at an all-time high and 44% unemployed have been out work six months or more, at an all-time high.

We had a gentlemen call in on one of our programs, he has a masters and had been out of work for four years. He went to a company and told management he would work for nothing in order to learn to operate a forklift. After training he got a job doing that work at a plumbing company. He has the distinction of beating out 26 other applicants. He has been told in 1-1/2 years they will be an opening for him in accounting, his major. This is the state of America today, as our transnational conglomerates ship our jobs out of the country every day.

We figure a debt extension bill is on the way, but it will only cut \$150 to \$200 billion a year in government spending, hardly an accomplishment. If the Fed does not inject \$850 billion into the economy we are looking at a minus 3% to 5% in GDP. That is in addition to buying \$1.7 trillion in treasuries and other associated toxic waste.

The newest recession began a few months ago, or should we say downturn in an inflationary depression. There will be no recovery this year or next without \$850 billion additional being thrown into the economy. No 3.5% growth. Perhaps a minus 4% if we are lucky. That should put unemployment close to 25% by 2012. After the news comes out that the term debt deal has been done the stock market will begin to slip downward.

As this transpires we see a million more foreclosures and more the following year. In order for the economy to revive housing it has to revive and we see absolutely no chance of that happening over the next two years. As the Fed supplies buckets of money and credit inflation will scream upward. 25% to 30% is already in the pipeline for next year via QE and Stimulus 2. There is no way that can be stopped. That will be added to by the results of QE 3 in 2013. We wish it won't be this way, but it is.

There has been an inevitability since August 15, 1971, that America and the western world would move from crisis to crisis until the financial and economic system eventually collapsed.

For those who have been objective over those years what we are seeing today is no surprise.

No one in America wants the merry-go-round to stop. Americans are not prepared to face the music. They naturally want more debt creation, but interestingly by 70%, they did not want a short-term debt extension. That is understandably confusing and the reason is that when it comes to economy and finance they are really in the dark. What they truly do not understand along with much of Wall Street is that the debt problem is much worse and deeper than they believe.

The problems in Europe are never ending. The solvent countries are discovering what we discovered a year ago May. The cost of the six-country bailout we projected at \$4 trillion. A month ago we increased that to \$4 to \$6 trillion. When we said \$4 trillion Germany said \$1 trillion. This past week they said \$3.5 trillion. We wonder why it took them so long to catch up. As of this writing the Greeks have signed a bailout deal but the lenders still do not know what they want to do. They are finally reaching the realization that they cannot be serviced never mind be repaid. You can cut wages and spending 40% or 50% and not expect revenues to fall. That means the bankers get paid and no one else does. That is what Wall Street's game is all about.

Bob Chapman is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Saturday, July 16, 2011

Smecker/Jensen: You Can't Kill a Planet and Live on It, Too

You Can't Kill a Planet and Live on It, Too

by Frank Joseph Smecker and Derrick Jensen [article link](#)

July 16, 2011 | Truthout

Let's expose the structure of violence that keeps the world economy running.

With an entire planet being slaughtered before our eyes, it's terrifying to watch the very culture responsible for this - the culture of industrial civilization, fueled by a finite source of fossil fuels, primarily a dwindling supply of oil - thrust forward wantonly to fuel its insatiable appetite for "growth."

Deluded by myths of progress and suffering from the psychosis of technomania complicated by addiction to depleting oil reserves, industrial society leaves a crescendo of atrocities in its wake. A very partial list would include the Bhopal chemical disaster, numerous oil spills, the illegal depleted uranium-spewing occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, mountaintop removal, the nuclear meltdown of Fukushima, the permanent removal of 95 percent of the large fish from the oceans (not to mention full-on systemic collapse of those oceans), indigenous communities replacement by oil wells, the mining of coltan for cell phones and Playstations along the Democratic Republic of the Congo/Rwanda border - resulting in tribal warfare and the near-extinction of the Eastern Lowland gorilla.

As though 200 species going extinct each day were not enough, climate change, a direct result of burning fossil fuels, has proved not only to be as unpredictable as it is real, but as destructive as it is unpredictable. The erratic and lethal characteristics of a changing planet and its shifting atmosphere are becoming the norm of the 21st century, their impact accelerating at an alarming pace, bringing this planet closer, sooner than later, to a point of uninhabitable ghastliness. And yet, collective apathy, ignorance and self-imposed denial in the face of all this sadistic exploitation and violence marches this culture closer to self-annihilation.

Lost in the eerily comforting fantasy of limitless growth, production and consumption, many people cling to things like Facebook, Twitter, "Jersey Shore" and soulless pop music as if their lives depended on it, identifying with a reality that's artificial and constructed, that panders to desire rather than necessity, that delicately conceals the violence at the other end of this economy, a violence so widespread that we're all not only complicit in it to a degree (e.g., if you're a taxpayer, you help subsidize the manufacturing of weapons of mass destruction), but victims of it as well. As Chris Hedges admonished in his books, "Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy" and the "Triumph of Spectacle," any culture that cannot distinguish reality from illusion will kill itself.

Moreover, any culture that cannot distinguish reality from illusion will kill everything and everyone else in its path as well as itself.

As the world burns, as species die off, as mothers breastfeed their children with dioxin-tainted breast milk, as nuclear reactors melt down into the Pacific while the aerial deployment of depleted uranium damages innocent lives, it is perplexing that so few people fight back against a system that has horror as a reality for most living on the planet. And those who fight back, who stand in opposition to the culture behind such wholesale abuse and call it what it is - a genocidal mega-state (especially if you believe that the lives of nonhumans are as important to them as yours is to you and mine is to me) - are met with hostility and hatred, scoffed at, harassed, even tortured. With so much at stake, why aren't more people deafening their ears to the nutcases who preach a future of infinite-growth economies? And why do so many people continue to put "the economy" first, to take industrial capitalism as we know it as a given and not fight back, defend what's left of the natural world?

"One of the reasons there aren't more people working to take down the system that's killing the planet is because their lives depend on the system," author and environmental activist Derrick Jensen told me from his home in California when I interviewed him on the phone recently. "If your experience is that your food comes from the grocery store and your water

comes from the tap, then you are going to defend to the death the system that brings those to you because your life depends on them," Jensen explained. "If your experience, however, is that your food comes from a land base and that your water comes from a stream, well, then you will defend to the death that land base and that stream. So part of the problem is that we have become so dependent upon this system that is killing and exploiting us, it has become almost impossible for us to imagine living outside of it and it's very difficult physically for us to live outside of it.

"The other problem is that fear is the belief we have something left to lose. What I mean by this is that I really like my life right now, as do a lot of people. We have a lot to lose if this culture is to go down. A primary reason so many of us do not want to win this war - or even acknowledge that it's going on - is that we materially benefit from this war's plunder. I'm really unsure how many of us would be willing to give up our automobiles and cell phones, hot showers and electric lights, our grocery and clothing stores. But the truth is, the system that leads to these things, that leads to technological advancement and our identity as civilized beings, are killing us and, more importantly, killing the planet."

Even in the absence of global warming, this culture would still be murdering the planet, bumping off pods of whales and flocks of birds; detonating mountaintops to access strata of coal and bauxite, eliminating entire ecosystems. All this violence inflicted upon an entire planet to run an economy based on the foolish and immoral notion that we can sustain industrial societies, all while trashing the planet's land bases, ecosystems and life. And the fantastic rhetoric those who insist on adapting to these changes promulgate - that technology will find a fix, that we can adapt, that the planet can and will conform to fixes in the market - is dangerous.

"Another part of the problem," Jensen told me, "is the narratives behind this culture's way of living. The premises of these narratives grant us the exclusive rights and privileges of dominion over this planet. Whether you subscribe to the religion of Science or of Christianity, these narratives tell us that our intelligence and abilities permit us exclusive rights and privileges to work our will on the world that is here for us to use. The problem with these stories, whether you believe in them or not, is that they have real effects on the physical world. The stories we're told about the world shape the way we perceive the world and the way we perceive the world shapes the way we behave in the world. The stories of industrial capitalism - that we can sustain infinite-growth economies - shapes the way this culture behaves in the world. And this behavior is killing the planet. Whether the stories we are told are fantasies or not doesn't matter, what matters is that these narratives are physical: the stories of Christianity may be fantasy - let's pretend for a moment that God doesn't exist - well, the Crusades still happened; the notion of race or gender may be up for debate, but obviously, race and gender does matter and this postmodern attitude drives me crazy because, yeah, race and gender is not an actual thing, but it all has real-world effects - African Americans comprise 58 percent of the prison population and one-third of all black men between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine are under some sort of criminal justice supervision; as for gender, well real males rape females.

"Another example [of how things that truly aren't real still have real-world effects]," Jensen continued, "is there was this serial killer a while back who was killing women in Santa Cruz. Voices in his head were telling him that if he didn't kill these women, then California would slide off into the ocean. It's apparent this guy was delusional, a total nut job and sick in the head, but his delusions still resulted in real-world effects. Hitler too had the delusion that Jews were poisoning the race. That delusion had real-world effects. And we can sit around and discuss whether Weyerhaeuser truly exists, but forests still get deforested. Or better yet, it's pretty clear that it's silly to really believe that the world won't run out of oil ... and then it's suddenly clear that it's not so silly - there is a physical reality. In the real world, you can't have a nature/culture split, but in this culture you do and it has real effects on the physical world. You can't live on a planet and kill it at the same time."

You find the problem with an industrial production economy when you unpack the word "production." As Jensen makes clear in his book "The Culture of Make Believe," production is essentially the conversion of the living to the dead: animals into cold cuts, mountains and rivers into aluminum beer cans, trees into toilet paper, oil into plastics and computers (one computer uses ten times its own mass in fossil fuels). To go paperless is not to go green, or maybe it is, depending on what shade of Green we're talking about here. Basically, every commodity one comes in contact with is soaked in oil, made from resources, marked by, as Jensen puts it, the turning of the living to the dead: Industrial production.

And with conflicts and wars that are waged or instigated by this culture to access (steal) the resources needed to fuel this economy's colossal machines, this culture winds up butchering entire non-industrialized communities of people ... the elderly, children who cling to their mothers as drones hawk over staggered onlookers ... the innocent and vulnerable written

off as "collateral damage." Himmler used a similar epithet for Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Serbs, Belarusians, and other Slavic peoples in a pamphlet he edited and had distributed by the SS Race and Settlement Head Office: "Untermenschen."

This is an acceptable price we must pay it, so we are told.

In the US, more lives are lost weekly from preventable cancers and other illnesses than are lost in ten years from terrorist attacks. And the corporations this culture fights for overseas are the very organizations culpable for these domestic deaths every week.

The list of victims whose lives are subject to violent assault and extinction to feed this culture's "production" is as long and as diverse as you want to make it.

"An infinite-growth economy is not only insane and impossible," remarked Jensen, "it's also abusive, by which I mean that it's based on the same conceit as more personal forms of abuse. It is, in fact, the macroeconomic enshrinement of abusive behavior. The guiding principle of abusive behavior is that the abuser refuses to respect or abide by limits or boundaries put up by the victim. Growth economies are essentially unchecked and will push past any boundaries set up by anyone other than the perpetrators. And a successful abuser will always ensure that there are some 'benefits' for the victim, in this case, e.g., we can watch TV, we can have computer access and play games online - we get 'benefits' that essentially keep us in line.

"Furthermore, according to the stories of industrial capitalism, this economic system must constantly increase production to grow and what, after all, is production? It is indeed the conversion of the living to the dead, the conversion of living forests into two-by-fours, living rivers into stagnant pools for generating hydroelectricity, living fish into fish sticks and ultimately all of these into money. And really, what is gross national product? It's a measure of this conversion of the living to the dead. The more quickly the living world is converted into dead products, the higher the GNP. And these simple equations are complicated by the fact that when GNP goes down, people often lose jobs. No wonder the world is getting killed. "And if we take global warming into consideration here - oh and I believe the latest study on global warming mentioned something along the lines of the planet now being on track to heat up by 29 degrees in the next eighty years ... if that isn't curtailed immediately, no one will survive that ... And so all the so-called solutions to global warming take industrial capitalism as a given. And here we see the same old abusive behavior: the narratives are not only created around the perceptions of the perpetrators, i.e. those in power, but are forced upon us by them as well, so we come to believe the narratives and accept them as a given. And, essentially, to take industrial capitalism as a given when it comes to solutions to global warming is absolutely absurd and insane. It's out of touch with physical reality. Yet it has disastrous effects on the real physical world. If you force a planet to conform to ideology you get what you get.

"A while back I had a conversation with an anarchist who was complaining that I was 'too ideological,' and that my ideology was 'the health of the earth.' Well, actually, the earth is not and cannot ever be an ideology. The earth is physical. It is real. And it is primary. Without soil, you don't have a healthy land base and without a healthy land base you don't eat, you die. Without drinkable clean water you die."

And this is one of the problems with our culture: its lack of ability to separate ideology - the kind that accommodates maximizing pleasure and domination - from the needs of the natural world. And, so, if solutions to global warming do not immediately address the basic needs of the planet, well ... we're fucked.

"One has to ask," pressed Jensen, "if hammerhead sharks could provide solutions, if the indigenous could give solutions and if we would listen to the solutions they are already giving, would these solutions take industrial capitalism as a given? The bottom line is that capitalist solutions to global warming are coming from the capitalist boosters, from those in power who are responsible for exploiting and destroying us and more importantly, the planet."

By the 1940s, in Germany, Arthur Nebe's gassing van was in wide use. Those who drove Nebe's death vans never thought of themselves as murderers, just as another somebody getting paid to drive a van, to do a job. Today, those who work for Boeing, Raytheon, Weyerhaeuser, Exxon Mobil, BP, the Pentagon ... will always see themselves as employees, not murderers. They will always see themselves as working a job that needs to be done.

Those members of this culture who blindly go along without interrogating the culture's narratives, who identify with the pathology of this culture, will always see themselves as just other members of society. For these people, the murder of a planet feels like economics; it feels normal after having been pushed out of consciousness by careers, styles and fashions; it may not even feel like anything at all after being psychically numbed by pop radio, sitcoms, smart phones, video games ... But at the other end of all these glittery distractions is an unrelenting array of violence, poverty, extinction, environmental degradation.

"I saw this right-wing bumper sticker the other day that read, 'You can have my gun when you pry it from my cold, dead fingers,' but it's not just guns: we're going to have to pry rigid claws off steering wheels, cans of hair spray, TV remote controls and two-liter bottles of Jolt Cola," cautioned Jensen. "Each of these individually and all of these collectively are more important to many people than are lampreys, salmon, spotted owls, sturgeons, tigers, our own lives. And that is a huge part of the problem. So of course we don't want to win. We'd lose our cable TV. But I want to win. With the world being killed, I want to win and will do whatever it takes to win."

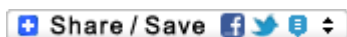
When Adolph Eichmann stood before the Jerusalem District Court and was asked why he agreed to the task of deporting Jews to the ghettos and concentration camps, his response was, *No one ever told me what I was doing was wrong*. Today, 200 species have become extinct; another indigenous community will disappear from this planet forever; an entire forest will be removed; and millions of human lives will be forced to endure the agonies of famine, war, disease, thirst, the loss of their land, their community, their way of life. Not enough people have stepped forward to say that what this culture is doing to the planet is wrong.

Well, here it is folks: What this culture is doing to our very selves, what it's doing to the planet, is wrong. So damn wrong. And the sooner we replace this economy, the sooner we can dissolve these toxic illusions and their formative narratives. Only then, can we begin to live the free lives we were born to live and win the fight.

Derrick Jensen has been called the poet philosopher of the ecological movement. He has written some 15 books critiquing contemporary society and the destruction of the environment.

Frank Joseph Smecker is a freelance writer and philosophy/English major at the University of Vermont. His work has appeared in: Truthout.org, Z Magazine, Rain Taxi, Counterpunch, The Ecologist, Counter Currents, Petroleum World, Fifth Estate, and elsewhere.

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Friday, July 15, 2011

[John W. Whitehead: The Military Industrial Complex](#)

The Military Industrial Complex: The Enemy from Within

By John W. Whitehead [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 11, 2011 | Rutherford Institute | ICH

“Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes ... known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.” --*James Madison*

“When a nation becomes obsessed with the guns of war, social programs must inevitably suffer. We can talk about guns and butter all we want to, but when the guns are there with all of its emphasis you don't even get good oleo. These are facts of life.” -- *Martin Luther King Jr.*

If there is any absolute maxim by which the federal government seems to operate, it is that the American taxpayer always gets ripped off, and Americans would do well to keep that in mind as Congress and the White House debate whether or not to raise the debt ceiling from its current high of \$14.3 trillion. For one thing, the grandstanding by both parties over health care costs and Social Security is nothing more than a convenient distraction from the glaring economic truth that at the end of the day, it's not the sick, the elderly or the poor who are stealing us blind and pushing America towards bankruptcy. It's the military industrial complex (the illicit merger of the armaments industry and the Pentagon) that President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned us against more than 50 years ago and which has come to represent perhaps the greatest threat to the nation's fragile infrastructure today.

Having been co-opted by greedy defense contractors, corrupt politicians and incompetent government officials, America's expanding military empire is bleeding the country dry at a rate of more than \$15 billion a month (or \$20 million an hour)--and that's just what the government spends on foreign wars. That does not include the cost of maintaining and staffing the 1000-plus U.S. military bases spread around the globe. Incredibly, although the U.S. constitutes only 5% of the world's population, America boasts almost 50% of the world's total military expenditure, spending more on the military than the next 19 biggest spending nations combined. In fact, the Pentagon spends more on war than all 50 states combined spend on health, education, welfare, and safety.

War is not cheap. Although the federal government obscures so much about its defense spending that accurate figures are difficult to procure, we do know that since 2001, the U.S. government has spent more than \$1.2 trillion in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. That number, however, is probably closer to \$2.7 trillion when you add in the war in Pakistan and other hidden costs, and will likely climb to \$4.4 trillion before it's all over. Additionally, the American military industrial complex is spending roughly \$4 million per day on the unconstitutional war in Libya.

Yet what most Americans fail to recognize is that these ongoing wars have little to do with keeping the country safe and everything to do with enriching the military industrial complex at taxpayer expense. Just consider the fact that the annual cost to support one U.S. servicemember in Afghanistan alone is over \$1 million, with fuel costs making up the bulk of the expenses. Of course, one of the reasons for the high cost of maintaining each soldier can be attributed to the lack of governmental oversight of private contractor billings, which are rampant with fraud, waste and fat.

War--or the art of killing--has unfortunately become a huge money-making venture, and America, with its vast military empire, is one of its best buyers and sellers. Not only does the U.S. have the largest defense budget, it also ranks highest as the world's largest arms exporter. According to a report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which tracks military expenditures worldwide, the arms industry is thriving despite the ongoing global economic recession. In fact, 45 of the top 100 of the world's largest arms-producing companies are based in the U.S. These U.S. corporations generated just under \$247 billion in 2009, which constituted 61% of total arms sales internationally.

The American military-industrial complex has erected an empire unsurpassed in history in its breadth and scope, one dedicated to conducting perpetual warfare throughout the earth. For example, while erecting a security surveillance state in the U.S., the military-industrial complex has perpetuated a worldwide military empire with American troops stationed in 177 countries (over 70% of the countries worldwide).

In the process, billions have been spent erecting luxury military installations throughout the world. For example, the U.S. Embassy built in Iraq, dubbed "Fortress Baghdad," covers 104 acres and boasts a "city within a city" that includes six apartment buildings, a Marine barracks, swimming pool, shops and 15-foot-thick walls. Camp Anaconda in Iraq, like many U.S. military bases scattered across the globe, was structured to resemble a mini-city with pools, fast food restaurants, miniature golf courses and movie theaters. In economic terms, the money invested in building these bases amounts to what American University professor Gordon Adams describes as "sunk" costs. "We're seeing this in Iraq," said Adams. "We're turning over to the Iraqis -- mostly either for a small penny or for free -- the infrastructure that we built in Iraq. But we won't see back any money from that infrastructure."

Unfortunately, Americans have been inculcated with a false, misplaced sense of patriotism about the military that equates devotion to one's country with supporting the war machine so that any mention of cutting back on the massive defense budget is immediately met with outrage. Yet they might be surprised to learn that little of the money being spent on so-called defense is actually being used for national defense. According to the Task Force on a Unified Security Budget, the FY2012 budget approved by the House of Representatives allocates 87 percent of security money for "offense" (military forces), only 7 percent for "defense" (homeland security), and only 6 percent for "prevention" (all non-military tools, such as diplomacy, foreign aid, and non-proliferation).

Sadly, those in uniform are being used as convenient fronts for a military industrial complex that is bilking taxpayers out of billions of dollars in questionable defense spending. There's a good reason why "bloated," "corrupt" and "inefficient" are among the words most commonly applied to the government, especially the Department of Defense and its contractors. For instance, a study by the Government Accountability Office found that \$70 billion worth of cost overruns by the Pentagon were caused by management failures. To put that in perspective, that equates to one and a half times the State Department's entire \$47 billion annual budget.

Fraud is rampant. A government audit, for example, found that defense contractor Boeing has been massively overcharging taxpayers for mundane parts, resulting in tens of millions of dollars in overspending. As the report noted, the American taxpayer paid:

\$71 for a metal pin that should cost just 4 cents; \$644.75 for a small gear smaller than a dime that sells for \$12.51: more than a 5,100 percent increase in price. \$1,678.61 for another tiny part, also smaller than a dime, that could have been bought within DoD for \$7.71: a 21,000 percent increase. \$71.01 for a straight, thin metal pin that DoD had on hand, unused by the tens of thousands, for 4 cents: an increase of over 177,000 percent.

Of course, this kind of rampant abuse is ludicrous, and never more so than at a time when unemployment is topping 9.2%. When most Americans can scarcely afford the cost of cooling their own homes, taxpayers should be up in arms over having to pay through the nose to the tune of \$20 billion--more than NASA's entire annual budget--to air condition the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. "In essence, what we're doing is we're air conditioning the desert over there in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places," noted retired brigadier general Steven Anderson, a former chief logistician for Gen. David Petraeus in Iraq. And if you think gas prices at home are high, just consider what the American taxpayer is being forced to shell out overseas: once all the expenses of delivering gas to troops in the field are factored in, we're paying between \$18-30 per gallon for gas in Iraq and Afghanistan. Incredibly, despite reports of corruption, abuse and waste, the mega-corporations behind much of this ineptitude and corruption continue to be awarded military contracts worth billions of dollars.

The rationale may keep changing for why American military forces are in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, but the one that remains constant is that those who run the government are feeding the appetite of the military industrial complex. And what began in 2001 as part of an alleged effort to root out al Qaeda has turned into a goldmine for the military industrial complex. Even the lip service that is paid to drawing down the troops doesn't amount to much of a savings in the end when you factor in the cost of replacing those troops with civilian contractors. For example, while the Obama administration was touting the withdrawal of troops from Iraq earlier this year, plans were being made to triple the size of the private security contractors and support staff to between 7,000 and 8,000.

Just consider: the Pentagon in 2008 spent more money every five seconds in Iraq than the average American earned in a year. And yet Congress and the White House want taxpayers to accept that the only way to reduce the nation's ballooning deficit and avoid raising the debt ceiling is by cutting "entitlement" programs such as Social Security and Medicare. As Martin Luther King Jr. recognized, under a military empire, war and its profiteering will always take precedence over the people's basic human needs.

Incredibly, if the government would just take the amount spent on the war in Afghanistan this year alone (\$122 billion in FY2011) and reallocate it where it's needed here at home, it would entirely wipe out the projected budget shortfalls for fiscal year 2012 for 41 states and the District of Columbia, totaling \$103 billion. Or to put it another way: in roughly 80% of the states projecting deficits this year, if the money spent by each state on the war were used for domestic purposes, it would wipe out that state's shortfall.

Simply put, we cannot afford to maintain our over-extended military empire. As a senior administration official involved in Afghanistan remarked to the *Washington Post*: “Money is the new 800-pound gorilla. It shifts the debate from ‘Is the strategy working?’ to ‘Can we afford this?’ And when you view it that way, the scope of the mission that we have now is far, far less defensible.” Or as one commentator noted, “Foreclosing the future of our country should not be confused with defending it.”

Finally, and inevitably, military empires collapse. The war bell is tolling, and it tolls for us. As Cullen Murphy, author of *Are We Rome?* and editor-at-large of *Vanity Fair* writes:

A millennium hence America will be hard to recognize. It may not exist as a nation-state in the form it does now--or even exist at all. Will the transitions ahead be gradual and peaceful or abrupt and catastrophic? Will our descendants be living productive lives in a society better than the one we inhabit now? Whatever happens, will valuable aspects of America's legacy weave through the fabric of civilizations to come? Will historians someday have reason to ask, Did America really fall?

The problem we wrestle with is none other than a distorted American empire, complete with mega-corporations, security-industrial complexes and a burgeoning military. And it has its sights set on absolute domination. Yet at the height of its power, even the mighty Roman Empire could not stare down a collapsing economy and a burgeoning military. Prolonged periods of war and false economic prosperity largely led to its demise, and it is feared that America, by repeating Rome's mistakes, is headed toward a similar collapse. As historian Chalmers Johnson predicts, “the United States will within a very short time face financial or even political collapse at home and a significantly diminished ability to project force abroad.”

Moreover, the so-called American empire faces a violent contradiction between its long republican tradition and its more recent imperial ambitions. As Chalmers Johnson writes:

The fate of previous democratic empires suggests that such a conflict is unsustainable and will be resolved in one of two ways. Rome attempted to keep its empire and lost its democracy. Britain chose to remain democratic and in the process let go its empire. Intentionally or not, the people of the United States already are well embarked upon the course of non-democratic empire.

I would suggest that what we have is a confluence of factors and influences that go beyond mere comparisons to Rome. It is a union of Orwell's *1984* with its shadowy, totalitarian government--i.e., fascism, the union of government and corporate powers--and a total surveillance state with a military empire extended throughout the world. And as we have seen with the militarizing of the police, the growth of and reliance on militarism as the solution for our problems both domestically and abroad affects the basic principles upon which American society should operate. The military does not view the Constitution in the same way as someone engaged in ensuring that the Bill of Rights and its freedoms are kept intact. Those in the military are primarily trained to conduct warfare, not preserve the peace. We must keep in mind that a military empire will be ruled not by lofty ideals of equality and justice but by the power of the sword.

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Thursday, July 14, 2011

Chris Marsden: The Rampant Criminality of the Corporate and Political Elite

The Rampant Criminality of the Corporate and Political Elite

Murdoch and the rule of the oligarchy
by Chris Marsden [article link](#) [article link](#)
July 13, 2011 | Global Research | WSWS

The ongoing exposure of systematic hacking of thousands of phones and computers by employees of Rupert Murdoch's News of the World lifts the lid on the rampant criminality of the corporate and political elite, in Britain and internationally. At least 7,000 people have had their phones hacked and their privacy invaded. The trawl for personal information has targeted a wide range of victims, from politicians and members of the royal family to the families of murder victims and soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

The scandal is revealing the thorough-going decay of democracy and all of the official institutions in Britain, including the major parties, Parliament, the judiciary and the media. The most powerful media corporation in Britain, which constantly trumpets the need for "law and order," has presided over serious violations of the law, including hacking on what one MP called "an industrial scale." It has done so year-on-year with virtual impunity.

Murdoch executives and reporters are notorious as well for threatening and bullying politicians and other notables who criticize the operations of News International or otherwise arouse the ire of the Murdoch family.

Now reports have emerged that a News of the World executive destroyed millions of potentially incriminating emails in order to thwart further investigations.

Both of the major parties, Conservative and Labour, are implicated in these crimes, not only because of their refusal to call to account News International, the parent firm of Murdoch's British media outlets, but because of their intimate relations with Murdoch's media empire. They never challenged the Metropolitan Police for accepting the patently absurd claim that these illegal practices were the actions of one rogue reporter and a private investigator, even as it surfaced that police officers had received tens of thousands of pounds in bribes from News of the World.

It was only after numerous civil cases had been taken out against the newspaper by celebrities whose phones were hacked that, in January, the Crown Prosecution Service announced it would review material held by police on phone hacking at News of the World to "assess if a fresh criminal trial is likely."

Prime Minister David Cameron on Friday was forced to acknowledge official collusion with the Murdoch press, stating, "The truth is, we have all been in this together—the press, politicians and leaders of all parties—and yes, that includes me."

He added, "During the last government, a police investigation was undertaken, it was inadequate and not enough was done. There were reports from the information commissioner and they went unheeded. There were select committee reports on phone hacking and there was no follow-up. Throughout all this, all the warnings, all the concern, the government at the time did nothing. And frankly, neither did the opposition."

This mea culpa is Cameron's attempt to limit the damage to his government from the scandal. It came the same morning as the arrest of former News of the World editor Andy Coulson, Cameron's head of communications until Coulson's forced resignation in January. However, neither Cameron's admission of responsibility nor his guarded swipe against former Labour governments do justice to the extent of the incestuous, decades-long relations between the Murdoch empire and Britain's political elite.

Murdoch is forever associated with the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, and above all with Thatcher's brutal assault on the working class. He cheered on her deregulation of the City of London, privatisations and tax cuts for corporations and the rich from which he benefited more than most. News of the World's parent company,

News International, carried out an infamous union-busting operation, sacking 6,000 print workers and transferring production to Wapping in London's East End in 1986.

Then, after Murdoch decided that the Tories had exhausted their usefulness as a vehicle for attacking the working class and enriching the ruling elite, he switched support to Labour—which was more than ready to do his bidding. Murdoch dictated government policy to such a degree that Lance Price, a media advisor to former Prime Minister Tony Blair, called Murdoch “the 24th member of the Cabinet.” Price added, “His presence was always felt.”

Murdoch himself has publicly boasted of setting the agenda of the Labour government on Europe and “the breakdown of law and order in Britain.” The Murdoch press has relentlessly promoted wars of aggression, most notably the illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003. Blair telephoned Murdoch personally on three occasions in the days leading up to the US-British invasion.

Current Labour leader Ed Miliband is now posing as a critic of News of the World, seeking to make political capital out of Cameron's relations with Coulson and Murdoch press executive Rebekah Brooks. This is a transparent fraud.

The News of the World hacking scandal first came to light in 2006 and was swept under the carpet by the Metropolitan Police, without challenge by the Labour governments of Blair and his successor, Gordon Brown. On April 9, an anonymous ex-minister told the Guardian that Murdoch had “relayed messages to Brown last year via a third party, urging him to help take the political heat out of the row, which he felt was in danger of damaging his company.”

It was only last month that Miliband himself attended News International's summer party in London, alongside shadow chancellor Ed Balls, two of his closest advisers, Tom Baldwin and Stewart Wood, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper and shadow foreign secretary Douglas Alexander. The Guardian noted at the time that Labour luminaries outnumbered a Conservative delegation headed by Cameron and his wife, Samantha.

These relations underscore the travesty of the electoral process in Britain. State policy is determined not by the population's choice to elect a Conservative or Labour government, but by a clique of billionaires that sets the agenda of all the major parties—of which Murdoch is a particularly influential member, thanks to his control of the media.

How does one account for the ability of employees of News International to engage in such rampant criminality without let or hindrance?

The official structures of politics and the media in Britain and internationally have become entirely divorced from and openly hostile to the interests of the general population. They have become the province of a plutocratic layer that acts without legal restraint.

Murdoch himself is widely acknowledged to be the most powerful man in Britain and one of the most powerful people in the world. He is the archetypal representative of a global financial oligarchy that has arisen on the basis of financial parasitism and an unprecedented growth of social inequality.

The narrow layer of the super-rich to which Murdoch belongs has dictated every aspect of political, economic and social life over more than three decades. His 175 or so newspapers and television channels, including Sky in Britain and Fox in the US, are widely viewed as kingmakers inside the political establishment.

Murdoch is the supreme purveyor of a particular type of gutter journalism, whose emphasis on sex scandals and the antics of the rich and famous is meant to divert and confuse the public and encourage the most backward sentiments.

In America, Fox News and the New York Post serve the same function as the Sun, News of the World (which Murdoch shut down on Sunday) and Sky TV in the UK, while the Wall Street Journal editorial page articulates the political agenda of the most reactionary sections of the US ruling elite. The Murdoch media befoul social and intellectual life with an unrelenting torrent of right-wing social nostrums, warmongering, national chauvinism, glorification of “free enterprise,” and demands that essential services on which millions rely be slashed.

The most significant expression of the political and ideological putrefaction this has produced is found within the former social democratic parties, such as the British Labour Party. They all easily adapted themselves to Murdoch's brand of politics, emerging as unabashed defenders of the savage austerity measures demanded after the 2008 financial crash.

The scale of the criminal activity that has been exposed at News of the World demands a full and public accounting. All of the major figures associated with News International, including Coulson, Brooks and Murdoch himself, must be questioned under oath as part of a full-scale criminal investigation. In any such inquiry, they should be joined by Blair, Brown, Cameron and their associates.

It is clear, however, that the British ruling class will not carry out such an investigation. Any inquiry under the control of the existing political establishment will be a cover-up, aiming to protect News International and its allies in the political establishment and state apparatus.

Justice will be secured, and the predatory and socially destructive activities of the media barons halted, only in connection with the development of a mass political movement of the working class that sets out to remove from power an elite which has demonstrated that it is entirely unfit to rule.

Chris Marsden is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Wednesday, July 13, 2011

Robert Scheer: The GOP's Sick Priorities

Social Security is a particularly weird whipping boy for what ails us, since the program has been solvent since its inception and will be so for the next quarter of a century.

The GOP's Sick Priorities

by Robert Scheer [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 13, 2011 | CommonDreams | TruthDig

How deceptive for politicians to stress “entitlements” when they talk about gutting Social Security and Medicare, two programs long paid for by their beneficiaries. The Republicans make it sound as if they’re doing us a favor, cutting government waste by seeking to strangle America’s two most successful domestic programs. And now Barack Obama seems poised to join their camp in undermining the essential lifeline for most of the nation’s seniors, many of whom lost their retirement savings in the banking meltdown.

These threatened programs are not government handouts to a privileged class, like defense contractors and bailed-out bankers, who do feel eminently entitled to pig out at the federal trough. On the contrary, Social Security and Medicare have been funded by a regressive tax that falls disproportionately on working middle-class income earners, while caps in the system leave the wealthy—most notably the hedge fund hustlers who helped cause today’s economic crisis—largely untaxed.

While there are many plausible ways to ensure the future of Medicare and Social Security—and extending a fair share of the burden to wealthier individuals is a good place to start—such changes should not be considered in the context of a bargain to raise the debt ceiling. These programs have nothing at all to do with a national debt that has spiraled out of control in the past four years as a result of untethered corporate greed. In that time the debt—already inflamed by two wars fought on the credit card while President George W. Bush cut taxes for the wealthy—rose a whopping 50 percent as a consequence of the deepest recession in 70 years, brought on by the banking collapse.

Indeed, the economic turmoil has put considerable pressure on these programs. In the past two years, expenditures for Social Security exceeded non-interest income for the first time since 1983, as the trustees of the fund reported the deficits “are in large part due to the weakened economy. ...” The interest earned on the more than \$2.4 trillion in the Social Security trust fund held by the Treasury more than made up the shortfall, and the fund will be able to fulfill its projected obligations, even given the strain of the baby boomers’ retirement, until 2036.

Social Security is a particularly weird whipping boy for what ails us, since the program has been solvent since its inception and will be so for the next quarter of a century. Is there any other public or corporate entity that we can guarantee will be in as good shape for the next 25 years, and even at that point be able to pay 75 percent of its obligations? Presidents both Republican and Democrat have routinely dipped into the Social Security trust fund to float the national debt, and yet critics from both parties have the effrontery now to treat as some sort of indulgence a program for which seniors, current and future, have paid. Seniors are as much “entitled” to the payback on their investment as the folks who buy Treasury notes, people who will be at the forefront of those protected by a rise in the debt ceiling.

Yes, there are more pressing issues with Medicare. Those have to do with cost containment in the medical industry, a situation aggravated when the Republican Bush expanded prescription drug coverage. Unfortunately, health care cost containment was not a serious focus of Obama’s health care reform, and without a national policy alternative it is difficult to contain the cost for seniors who are medically the most needy and therefore the most vulnerable.

As with the problems of Social Security, the problems of Medicare can be dealt with handily by increasing payments from the wealthier segment of the population. A very limited effort in that direction was included in the Obama health care law, which requires a 0.9 percent increase in Medicare payments beginning in 2013 for couples earning more than \$250,000.

Even more troubling than potential Medicare cuts is the threat to Medicaid, a program that provides health care to 68 million needy children, disabled individuals, pregnant women and poor seniors. These people are “entitled” to such aid only as a matter of government-recognized decency that has historically been supported by both Republican and Democratic presidents. That Obama is now even considering reducing support for the most vulnerable in the current harsh economy has brought written opposition from two-thirds of Senate Democrats.

It is absurd that Medicaid, along with Medicare and Social Security, is on the chopping block when there is no serious effort to find savings in a defense budget equal to that of the rest of the world’s nations combined, and still at Cold War era levels despite the lack of a sophisticated military enemy. And that the GOP-led House has gotten a supposedly progressive president to consider doing serious damage to our most vulnerable population in order to placate Republicans determined to continue massive tax breaks for the wealthy is morally obscene.

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Robert Scheer is editor of Truthdig.com and a regular columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle.

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Tuesday, July 12, 2011

Dave Lefcourt: Extremism, Endless War, Apathy and Passive Indifference

Extremism, Endless War, Apathy and Passive Indifference

by Dave Lefcourt [article link](#)

July 11, 2011 | OpEdNews

There are times the disenchantment feels overwhelming, that the forces of unnecessary endless war, brutality, the killing of innocents in drone strikes and missile attacks et al is so endemic while the majority of people remain apathetic and passively indifferent. That is galling.

One imagines somehow shaking people out of their stupor while shouting, "Don't you see; don't you realize what's going on?" Then coming to ones senses and thinking they're thinking I'm some sort of crazed lunatic, over-reacting as "chicken little" and the sky is falling. And this is not just with those on the right!

There are times the exasperation is felt with those on the left. Such is the case with Libya and Qaddafi. It seemed unconscionable to let this madman massacre the people of Benghazi and from here the U.N. at the 11th hour stepping in and halting his assault on the city and its people was the correct action to take. Yet the anti-war left denounced the U.N.

interdiction as just another example of imperial over-reach. From here this action shouldn't be equivocated with America's wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, the over-reach into Pakistan and Yemen. It seemed like a knee jerk reaction.

The same can be said of the ACLU and its support of the Supreme Court's decision upholding "Citizens United" in an extremist interpretation of the 1st Amendment giving corporations the same freedom of speech rights as people.

These are two examples of leftist extremism even if they refuse to see it. One embracing the power of the state while the other seeing no legitimacy in states taking action.

The right and today's Republicans are easily dismissed as monolithic, ideological reactionaries who offer absolutely nothing. The fact is the left has its demagogues and extremist ideologues as well.

It has been hard to reconcile the ideological left's sometime lockstep, knee jerk nature.

In looking at the past there have been extremist (seen as such at the time) ideological and successful movements. Think of the suffragettes who campaigned tirelessly for women's right to vote, the civil rights movement against official segregation and denial of equal rights. Before that were the abolitionists against slavery (a cause for the Civil War but which subsequently ended the practice).

Then there have been the unsuccessful ideological movements (with some continuing to this day).

Prohibition was enacted attempting to legislate morality but was repealed some 15 years later with the realization you can't legislate against and abolish sin. It only magnified the desire to commit it and made it even more appealing. It is why the war on drugs is an utter failure. Even poverty which has always existed can never be eliminated and the war on poverty could do little in ending it. The war on terror only results in endless war and is something that has always existed and can never be eradicated. Like crime can never be completely eradicated it can be controlled from completely eroding civil society but there will always be crime.

Declaring war on something doesn't mean it will be eradicated. Some cures can be found for some diseases but disease will never be eliminated.

Can we make war against brutality and eliminate it from the face of the earth? Unfortunately, no.

Even when there has been successful war against an imperialist fascist state such as Nazi Germany in W.W. II, its success didn't eliminate imperialism or fascism forever. Fascist imperialism could be resurrected. Certainly ending Nazi fascism didn't kill fascism.

Communism didn't end with the demise of the Soviet Union. Capitalism doesn't exist without the state rescuing it from its excesses and applying socialistic measures to keep it from imploding.

Man is an imperfect species. He (she) can never be made perfect. Life itself can never be made perfect, with only success and no failure. There can not be success without some failure.

We are on the threshold of biological wonder, completing the genome and working with the fundamental building blocks of life. There may be a time where new limbs can be grown, a cure for Alzheimer's and the like but the idea of endless life and no death? Prolonging life is obviously happening now, but death is as much a part of life as life itself.

In the West we embrace "progress" as if it is a human, instinctive and universal value. This is Western hubris as much as American's hubris believing everyone wants to be an American or that globalization is some inevitable result of human progress.

There are Islamic cultures that do not embrace "progress", where religion and government are the same and not separate as we in the west believe it should be.

The American Indian culture had no concept of ownership of the land. Owning land was an alien concept brought by European colonialism and imperialism. Americans often think of "ownership" as something God given and a natural right. The American Indian culture was decimated by overwhelming numbers of mostly white Americans of European heritage taking "ownership" of the land. Just imagine if the American Indian culture had superior numbers but it didn't and the Native Americans were brutalized and forced to adapt. So in truth the freedom we extol was really the result of conquest and plunder, not something that God granted.

Be that as it may, too many Americans today take their freedom for granted, as if they are "entitled" and as Americans "exceptional" in getting their way, again as if God granted.

This American hubris is triumphalist that embraces unnecessary war and acquiesces over our hegemony all over the world and to which the world opposes.

Hopefully, it is not too late to learn mutual respect of others, their values, their culture and differences.

We can no longer be imperialist overseers as if the oceans are American lakes and we dominate the world.

It remains to be seen whether we have the foresight and ability to do so; either that or suffer the fate of all other empires before us that fell in the past. This time in our own unceremonious demise.

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Ethan Indi: Jesus, My Favorite Conspiracy Theorist

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by Ethan Indi [article link](#)

July 11, 2011 | OpEdNews

Language is like a map. And stories take people to new places. Yet if we don't possess the language to put the story in context its value might be overlooked. Elimination of language takes away and new language expands. Conspiracy theorists often offer new language so people can follow them, while people who would like to eliminate conspiracies like to eliminate language and stories and storytellers even.

President Eisenhower arguably knew more about the military and war than any other US president and was perhaps the greatest conspiracy theorist of the last century with his coining of the phrase "military industrial complex" and his warning concerning it. The powers that be normally discount and disbelieve any notion of conspiracy, and any new language concerning it, but when the President defines it, it is hard to deny. The military industrial complex describes a militaristic corporate entity among entities.

There is endless variety of conspiracy, clandestine crimes and power grabs, but they all pertain to one goal; oligarchical collectivism. George Orwell, another great conspiracy theorist right up there with Eisenhower, originally penned this phrase. He arguably authored the most profound political fiction on conspiracy theory. Oligarchical collectivism is at root of every institutional conspiracy over individuals for thousands of years. Oligarchical collectivism means the coming together of the few in control of the many, the linking of pyramid systems. The military industrial complex is just one example of oligarchical collectivism.

Oligarchical collectivism is the phrase, the unification of institutions of the few in control of the many is the story. The military industrial complex and oligarchical collectivism are keys to understanding the map, the story. Jesus Christ's story is one of an individual standing up to oligarchical collectivism. He is a peaceful warrior who sees wrongdoing interlinked over individuals and speaks up about it. Jesus reacted to the epitome of oligarchical collectivism and tossed over tables and ruffled the feathers of institutions. He stood up the interlinked institutions of the Jewish temple supported by the Roman State and the traders/bankers inside the temple. The oligarchical collectivism for Jesus was the same we have today, interlinking of institutions of religion, state and corporation. The wrongdoing set forth by linking of church, state and corporate institutions is enough to make even Jesus angry.

Exploitive institutions are set up in the same pyramidal shape now as they were then. The few are at the top controlling the many through interlocked institutions. And people should be angry. People should be angry and inspired to take action, like a peaceful warrior, like Jesus, when oligarchical collectivism takes place.

And yet people are so subdued, so absolutely and wholly apathetic that we will let the military industrial complex run over strangers and their oligarchical operations rain nuclear poison over entirety. We will let corporate agriculture genetically modify plants and animals without concern. Jesus' story is the story the Prince of Peace fearlessly standing up to and calling out the oligarchical collectivism of his day. Jesus stood up to the oligarchical collectivism he was surrounded by not because he was the son of God, but because he was also a mortal and standing up for liberty is at the core of our mortal human condition. Jesus wanted them to stop doing business and exchanging money in the temple which made revenue for the few among the many, those in control of the church, state and corporate.

It is human nature to stand up and repel oligarchical collectivism and yet people today are so passive and tolerant we will let oligarchical collectivists hold reign through one overt conspiracy after another. This itself is conspiracy and as a accused conspiracy theorist I have the phrase for the map to the story. There is an ongoing conspiracy committed by all institutions to instill tolerance on people. Being tolerant toward individuals is okay. Compassion towards individuals is better. Tolerance of individuals is a start, but even Jesus Christ the lord didn't tolerate institutional wrongdoing. Jesus knew very well the difference between individuals and institutions.

People are tolerant of wrongdoing, tolerant of oligarchical institutions, tolerant of militaristic corporatist exploitation of others, people are tolerant of government involvement in drug smuggling and gun running. Many people are tolerant little bitches who take more offense to harsh language than they do to exploitation of their neighbors and themselves. And at the same time those with institutionally induced tolerance of institutional wrongdoing are less likely to tolerate an individual's alternate race, origin or perspective.

This misunderstanding, this misunderstanding of tolerance and confusion of individuals and institutions is a conspiracy gluing all other conspiracies together. It is the conspiracy of Institutionally Induced Tolerance and should be a psychiatric disorder simply called IT. You have to be fearful of being human, you have to lose all sense of humanity to stand down to institutions and oligarchical collectivism. You have to be barren of feeling or ignorant of the most basic precepts of reality to not be angry when confronted by oligarchical collectivism. Perhaps the conspiracy of IT is so wide that tolerance is induced biologically as well as politically.

I myself am certain that the conspiracy theory of IT is not theory, but certainty. I feel this way through compiled information and something institutions do not have and would like to eliminate the validity of, intuition. Institutions despise human intuition, mainly because intuition can detect oligarchical collectivism instantly. To me IT is not as much theory as it is actuality, however I understand it as a theory and in using the word theory I like all other theorists of all other subjects, merely pose the notion for consideration. Eighty five percent of Americans suffer from Institution Induced Tolerance, do your part to fight this disease and stand up to oligarchical collectivism, like Jesus.

Ethan Indi: I write. I love the USA; locals, land and liberty. I hate institutions placed above locals, land and liberty. I have roots in Maine, NYC and Northern California. My freshman work is titled The Complete Patriot's Guide to Oligarchical Collectivism: Its Theory and Practice. It is pro individual and anti institution and may become contraband for thought provoking. In the book I investigate political mentality and political power for individuals among institutions. Progressive Press is the publisher. Within the book are new concepts and new terms based on observations of history, philosophy and reality. I coin the term petrolithic era which began when Diesel died and continues on today. You can see cover and buy it before it's banned on amazon or many other websites and perhaps your local independent bookstore.

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The Prophetic Redoubt and Prescience of Theodore Roszak
by Christopher Diamant [article link](#)
July 11, 2011 | OpEdNews

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Monday, July 11, 2011

[Shamus Cooke: Deficit Reduction vs. Democracy](#)

Deficit Reduction vs. Democracy
by Shamus Cooke [article link](#)
July 11, 2011 | CommonDreams

Listening to Congress debate deficit deduction is like listening to a den of lions discuss the welfare of zebras. In both cases the debate is very one-sided. Democrats and Republicans sound disagreeable on TV, but their arguments differ by the tiniest of degrees (like lions fighting over how best to eat a zebra.)

The zebras in this case are U.S. working people, who are not seeing their interests represented by their so-called representatives. Instead of fixing the national deficit in the way that the vast majority of Americans would like, only the opinions of a tiny minority of very rich people are being considered. Both political parties are uniting to reduce the deficits on the backs of working people.

For example, Obama's chief of staff, William Daley, spoke recently about the budget deficit and the need for massive cuts to social programs, which include Social Security and Medicare:

"Everyone [Democrats and Republicans] agrees that a number around \$4 trillion [in cuts] is the number that will make a serious dent in our deficit...He [Obama] didn't come to this town to do little things. He came to do big things." (July 10th, 2011).

In a recent presidential address Obama said: "Government has to start living within its means, just like families do. We have to cut the spending we can't afford so we can put the economy on sounder footing, and give our businesses the confidence they need to grow and create jobs."

This is the language of the right wing, which is now the language of both the Democrat and Republican parties. In reality, the U.S. government could easily access trillions of dollars in revenue; it simply chooses not to. Both political parties refuse to discuss how raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations could easily fix the current deficit issue on both the federal and state levels. The ONLY mention of taxing the rich is in the context of the Bush tax cuts, which some Democrats would allow to expire in the coming year; but it's very possible that Democrats will "compromise" on this issue yet again.

Even economist and liberal Obama-backer Paul Krugman put two and two together when he said:

"in fact, if all you did was listen to his [Obama's] speeches, you might conclude that he basically shares the GOP's diagnosis of what ails our economy and what should be done to fix it." (July 8th, 2011).

The rich and corporations have always hated Social Security and Medicare; they'd rather not pay taxes towards these programs at all. It lowers their profits. And ONLY this perspective is being shared on the mainstream media and being discussed in the halls of Congress. If massive cuts are made to these federal programs at the expense of millions of working people -- without substantially raising taxes on the wealthy -- then the safety net in the U.S. will have been critically injured.

How would the vast majority of working people in this country like the deficit to be fixed? Poll after poll has indicated that cutting Social Security and Medicare is VERY unpopular, while raising taxes on the wealthy is extremely popular. A recent Washington Post/ABC News poll reported that 78 percent of Americans are opposed to cuts in Medicare, while 72 percent favor taxing the rich. (April 20th, 2011).

But polls are just one way of expressing popular opinion, i.e. democracy. Another alternative is massive street mobilizations. In Greece the majority of people have exposed the anti-democratic policies of their government, which is trying to impose massive cuts to social programs to fix Greece's budget problems. Sound familiar? If the Greek government doesn't change course it will have zero popular backing, i.e., it will be a dictatorship. Obama's silence on this situation in Greece is very telling.

In order to follow the Greek and Wisconsin examples of massive mobilizations, there must be an organizational push within working class organizations to make it happen. A resolution adopted unanimously by the Executive Committee of San Francisco Labor Council on July 5, 2011 expresses this vision:

"The big question now is what the labor movement will do to meet this challenge confronting working people and the great majority. The choice is clear: either confine labor's protest against cuts in the social programs to pronouncements opposing them, coupled with lobbying; or combine these efforts with an all-out mobilization of the rank-and-file and our allies to prevent the cuts from being enacted."

The San Francisco Labor Council resolution also encouraged all sectors of labor to organize "a campaign to mobilize support for "No Cuts or Concessions! Tax the Corporations and the Rich!" in the streets -- where it counts the most -- and in every corner of the nation."

Democracy is no longer expressed in the halls of Congress nor in the White House and must therefore be transferred to the streets.

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Guess Who Didn't Benefit from \$2 Trillion Worth of Increased Worker Productivity

Nearly \$2 Trillion Purloined from U.S. Workers in 2009

by James Cypher [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 11, 2011 | CommonDreams | Dollars & Sense

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The Great Unravelling

by Stephen Lendman [article link](#)

July 10, 2011 | Countercurrents

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Trickle-Down Cruelty and the Politics of Austerity

by Henry A. Giroux [article link](#)

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Joseph E. Stiglitz: The Evils of Unregulated Capitalism

The Evils of Unregulated Capitalism

by Joseph E. Stiglitz [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 10, 2011 | CommonDreams | Al Jazeera | ICH

Just a few years ago, a powerful ideology - the belief in free and unfettered markets - brought the world to the brink of ruin. Even in its hey-day, from the early 1980s until 2007, US-style deregulated capitalism brought greater material well-being only to the very richest in the richest country of the world.

Indeed, over the course of this ideology's 30-year ascendance, most Americans saw their incomes decline or stagnate year after year.

Moreover, output growth in the United States was not economically sustainable. With so much of US national income going to so few, growth could continue only through consumption financed by a mounting pile of debt.

I was among those who hoped that, somehow, the financial crisis would teach Americans (and others) a lesson about the need for greater equality, stronger regulation, and a better balance between the market and government.

Alas, that has not been the case.

On the contrary, a resurgence of right-wing economics, driven, as always, by ideology and special interests, once again threatens the global economy - or at least the economies of Europe and America, where these ideas continue to flourish.

In the US, this right-wing resurgence, whose adherents evidently seek to repeal the basic laws of mathematics and economics, is threatening to force a default on the national debt. If Congress mandates expenditures that exceed revenues, there will be a deficit, and that deficit has to be financed.

Rather than carefully balancing the benefits of each government expenditure program with the costs of raising taxes to finance those benefits, the right seeks to use a sledgehammer - not allowing the national debt to increase forces expenditures to be limited to taxes.

This leaves open the question of which expenditures get priority - and if expenditures to pay interest on the national debt do not, a default is inevitable. Moreover, to cut back expenditures now, in the midst of an ongoing crisis brought on by free-market ideology, would inevitably simply prolong the downturn.

A decade ago, in the midst of an economic boom, the US faced a surplus so large that it threatened to eliminate the national debt.

So *what* happened?

Unaffordable tax cuts and wars, a major recession, and soaring health-care costs - fueled in part by the commitment of George W Bush's administration to giving drug companies free rein in setting prices, even with government money at stake - quickly transformed a huge surplus into record peacetime deficits.

The remedies to the US deficit follow immediately from this diagnosis: put America back to work by stimulating the economy; end the mindless wars; rein in military and drug costs; and raise taxes, at least on the very rich.

But the right will have none of this, and instead is pushing for even more tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, together with expenditure cuts in investments and social protection that put the future of the US economy in peril and that shred what remains of the social contract.

Meanwhile, the US financial sector has been lobbying hard to free itself of regulations, so that it can return to its previous, disastrously carefree, ways.

But matters are little better in Europe. As Greece and others face crises, the medicine du jour is simply timeworn austerity packages and privatization, which will merely leave the countries that embrace them poorer and more vulnerable. This medicine failed in East Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere, and it will fail in Europe this time around, too. Indeed, it has already failed in Ireland, Latvia, and Greece.

There is an alternative: an economic-growth strategy supported by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Growth would restore confidence that Greece could repay its debts, causing interest rates to fall and leaving more fiscal room for further growth-enhancing investments.

Growth itself increases tax revenues and reduces the need for social expenditures, such as unemployment benefits. And the confidence that this engenders leads to still further growth.

Regrettably, the financial markets and right-wing economists have gotten the problem exactly backwards: they believe that austerity produces confidence, and that confidence will produce growth. But austerity undermines growth, worsening the government's fiscal position, or at least yielding less improvement than austerity's advocates promise. On both counts, confidence is undermined, and a downward spiral is set in motion.

Do we really need another costly experiment with ideas that have failed repeatedly? We shouldn't, but increasingly it appears that we will have to endure another one nonetheless.

A failure of either Europe or the US to return to robust growth would be bad for the global economy. A failure in both would be disastrous - even if the major emerging-market countries have attained self-sustaining growth.

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Joseph E. Stiglitz is University Professor at Columbia University. Among many books, he is the author of [Globalization and Its Discontents](#). He received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001 for research on the economics of information. He is the co-author, with Linda Bilmes, of [The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Costs of the Iraq Conflict](#). His most recent book is [Free Fall: America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy](#).

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Reagan Mythology is Leading US Off a Cliff

During Reagan's presidency, the US went from a creditor to debtor nation and marked a take-off for financial inequality.

by Paul Rosenberg [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 10, 2011 | CommonDreams | Al Jazeera

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Sunday, July 10, 2011

Caroline Arnold: How Much Blame Do We Share for Our Leaders' Failures?

How Much Blame Do We Share for Our Leaders' Failures?

Are we rats or are we humans?

by Caroline Arnold [article link](#)

July 10, 2011 | CommonDreams | Kent-Ravenna Record Courier (Ohio)

Six years ago, in the wake of the botched management of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, a friend warned me against blaming Republicans.

I replied flippantly that as an unrepentant progressive, I quite enjoyed blaming Republicans, though I recognized that even the GOP, PNAC, and all their associated think-tanks and trained media rescue-dogs couldn't have single-handedly created a disaster of that magnitude. I added that if the Republicans had planned Katrina, they probably would have directed it to Ohio. Of course there aren't any hurricanes in Ohio, but heck, there weren't any WMDs in Iraq, either.

Another friend who had volunteered in the cleanup of Katrina running a ham radio operation observed that among the agencies and organizations trying to help, the farther up the hierarchy of any institution, public or private, the worse prepared the people were, the more out of touch, the more incompetent, and the more their efforts were downright damaging.

... sounds like [The Peter Principle](#) to me. And an interesting corollary would probably be that the higher the hierarchy, the greater the level of incompetence.

But how does that work in democracy? Should we expect our elected leaders to rise to our level of incompetence, or theirs? And then who should we blame for their failure?

Or have they failed?

Take Obama. He claimed to offer "the Audacity of Hope", and too many of us interpreted that as a Hope of Audacity. We hoped Obama would be audacious, bold and daring, and stand up **against** war, torture, extralegal assassinations, proliferating weaponry and tyranny, and privatization of public responsibilities, and **for** human rights, due process, universal health care, quality education for all, and policies for safe renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and humane immigration.

Though Democrats feel he's failed, he's been quite competent at managing the takeover of our government by the private sector, corporations and the very wealthy.

Looking at the field of possible Republican candidates doesn't offer much hope either, though there is plenty of audacity – and citizens who apparently resonate with it.

Four years ago I [wrote a piece](#) based on the Declaration of Independence that included these paragraphs:

The Bush-Cheney White House has enlisted "Armies of foreign Mercenaries" (in this case multinational corporations) to do the works of death, desolation, and tyranny. These bright angels manipulate public policy and public funds: Big Arms - corporations that profit from making deadly weapons and materials for war; Big Energy - profiting from fossil resources, nuclear technology, and human poverty and overpopulation; and Big Brokers - of services ranging from student loans and health care to mercenary soldiers, "extreme rendition," commercial spying, and propaganda for governments, businesses and ideologies.

It is increasingly evident that Bush and Cheney believe they Command & Control the U.S. government, its people and its resources, that they need not obey its laws, or even let citizens know what they do with our money, our government, our young soldiers and our venerable ideals.

What's changed except the names of those in power?

Today our elected leaders committed to privatization, predatory capitalism and Command & Control management are prevailing, making us non-rich people into lab-rats and feeder-rats for their experiments. Cutting our rations of locally grown food, affordable homes, education, medical care, clean air and water, and feeding our youth and our planet's resources to war, weapons and private profit will not lead to justice, jobs, prosperity or democracy. It will only reduce more of us to rats to serving the recreations of the rich.

The problem with ideal democracy – the commitment to give every person the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives – is that it is not quick or nimble enough to deal with its own complexities, with the language, metaphors and concepts of media-driven popular culture, or with the light-speed communication of information, misinformation, and disinformation, let alone those engendered by overpopulation, predatory capitalism, runaway consumption, mass media, politics, religions, and advances in science, technology and medicine. It is further challenged by the extension of personhood to corporations.

* * *

Fifty years ago Reinhold Niebuhr observed:

"The sickness from which modern civilization suffers is organic and constitutional. ... Private ownership means social power. The unequal division of social power leads automatically inequality and injustice."

Any kind of power – physical violence, slavery, racism, sexism, bullying; political, theological, or economic, corrupts both those who wield it and those who receive it.

Today's efforts to destroy unions and collective bargaining in Ohio and Wisconsin, and to promote our assorted overseas wars are essentially aimed at stripping self-determination from – thereby enslaving-- those unable to pay for it.

Are we rats or are we humans – aware, discerning, self-determined and capable of choosing our leaders, actions and words? Eight years ago I had the audacity to be hopeful ("[Let's Talk...](#)" 5/18/03) that we could talk to one another.

Apparently we've reached the level of our incompetence. Now who can we blame?

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Caroline Arnold (\$20,000/ \$70,000) retired after 12 years on the Washington staff of US Senator John Glenn. She served three terms on the Kent (OH) Board of Education. In retirement she is active with Kent Environmental Council and sits on the board Family & Community Services of Portage County. E-mail: csarnold@neo.rr.com

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Metaphors for a Post-Federal America

by Karen Kwiatkowski [article link](#)

July 9, 2011 | LewRockwell

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Saturday, July 9, 2011

[Bob Chapman: The Looting of Federal Pensions, Social Security and Medicare](#)

Mounting Public Debt. The Looting of Federal Pensions, Social Security and Medicare

by Bob Chapman [article link](#)

July 9, 2011 | Global Research

Government debt will be in the vicinity of \$1.5 trillion this year. Ever since May 16th short-term debt has been frozen at about \$14.3 trillion. Up until May 16th the year-to-debt fiscal debt was \$783.135 billion. That means if no August 2nd agreement is reach, \$275 billion will be needed up to August 2nd, a total of about \$700 billion will be needed by 9/30/11, the end of the fiscal year. Those funds are to come from federal pensions, Social Security and Medicare. How will these funds be paid back? We do not know, but we would guess there could be legislation to commandeer private pensions, 401Ks and IRAs. On the other hand an alternative is for the Fed to create \$700 billion and buy the Treasury debt. That alone, with normal funding, could reach over \$2 trillion. That means they would have to create another additional \$850 billion to keep the economy from slipping into a great dark pit. That means additional net funds that would have to be created out of thin air of close to \$3 trillion. That means mega inflation 2 to 3 years down the line. In addition the US debt to GDP should be more than 100% by the end of the fiscal year 9/30/11.

We guess the Fed can keep interest rates near zero until borrowers finally get fed up with low returns and a loss in principal, as the dollar deteriorates. It was four years ago when rates were 5-1/4%. Rates in time will return to that level and cause economic and financial devastation. We can also assure you Treasury buyers are not driving rates down and bond prices up, the Fed can take full credit for that. Those who seek safety in low interest Treasuries are giving up purchasing power. In today's markets there is no such thing as safety.

There are those that believe it is time to start to raise interest rates and that the time for stimulus is past. They are probably correct, but the problem is the economy cannot stand on its own. Although deflationary depression will come eventually to force it now would mean a great war or series of wars would now have to begin.

It also has become self-evident to the populace or at least half of Americans that we cannot keep amassing debt and boosting the economy with stimulus. Their fears are reflected via much higher inflation and major unemployment, both of which are worsening daily. They have experienced three years of this, so to be told by the President, the Fed, the Treasury and Wall Street that what they are experiencing is transitory, reaches deaf ears.

Another grandstanding act by the President and his handlers was the latest release of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve - only enough to replace one days worldwide consumption. This was supposed to show the administration's concern that Americans were paying too much for gasoline and inflation was cutting their purchasing power. Their attempt was a failure, but the sale brought in badly needed cash to fund the growing deficit. We believe that was really what the exercise was all about. The move also had its negative affects on the commodity and gold and silver markets, at least for a few days. The failure of these financial and economic false flag operations shows you the underlying weakness of the financial and economic structure and the strength of commodities and gold and silver. Every move Wall Street and banking makes lasts only days or a week, then it is right back to the forceful underlying trend. We believe these elitists are now starting to question whether what they are doing will work. An example was the massive naked short covering not seen in years in gold and silver. JPM, HSBC and others lost the battle in silver and capitulated by covering. This was a major event. They knew the RICO class action lawsuit against them was about to be announced, so they covered a good portion of their shorts that were being used to suppress silver prices. Gold reacted by rising almost \$35.00 and closing up \$32.60 and silver rising \$2.25 and closing up \$1.80. The professionals know what this means. The cartel has suffered a huge defeat and if JPM and HSBC lose in court, which they should, it will cost the elitists tens of billions of dollars. The question is how will they arrange to transfer the losses to the public, or will the losses be big enough to take JPM and HSBC under. Only time will tell, but the result will be less control over gold and silver markets and a slight move back to free markets. They cannot take too many losses like this. What it shows you is that these people can be beaten and that we will win this war against these criminals.

Over the past few years, lenders have cut back on lines of credit, which has made many Americans unable to access affordable credit. The engine that has driven the economy for many years, cheap available credit, has come to an end and accessibility will become more difficult in the future. A few years ago we noted the availability of credit was beginning to be reduced and in time would reduce consumption. Over those ensuing years many Americans are no longer in the credit system because they cannot meet lending or regulatory qualifications. This is a direct reflection of 22.6% unemployment and massive home foreclosures. The unemployment numbers are even worse than meet the eye. The statistics define the private sector too broadly. In May, the distortion continued with private businesses adding 83,000 jobs of which 34,000 were in health care, social services and education, which are all subsidized. Thus, the real addition was 49,000. Over the past two years 980,000 jobs were added, 7.7 million jobs lost and of 8.4 million jobs lost so far in the inflationary depression only 291,000 have been added. If you cover 11 years instead of five years, 11.7 million have been lost. Real private sector employment was 83.1%. In 12/09 the number was 83.8% and in 1950, 86.2% or a 3.6% drop.

The government needs to revive domestic manufacturing, because foreign nations deliberately devalue their currencies and pay slaves wages. The only thing that can change this is tariffs on goods and services. Thus, tightened lending standards and horrible unemployment keep homebuyers from buying into that monstrous inventory for sale. Never mind buy buying a house, those unemployed cannot open a bank account nor do they own a debit or credit card. Credit scores may have risen to 696, the highest in at least four years, but it doesn't help the unemployed. The other underlying cause is that consumers simply have too much debt, even though delinquencies have fallen 30% in two years. Those with jobs are doing ok, but persistently higher inflation is eating big chunks of their power to consume.

What America is seeing today is a flat lining economy. When the credit crisis began, and it is not over, real GDP fell 4%, vs. 25% in the early 1930s. Can you imagine where the economy would be without the bailout of the financial sector, government and to a lesser degree the economy? We are talking about perhaps \$5 trillion that we know about. If you take away unemployment, extended unemployment, food stamps, Medicaid and various other social services, we could be in the same spot today as we were in the 1930s. We have been without recovery for almost five years. At least the Great Depression had recovery in 1933 and 1934. We may not have a WWII on the horizon, but we sure have many perpetual wars for perpetual peace. Today the excuse is rogue states and terrorists, which are just excuses to have more undeclared wars.

We have to laugh at noted economists who continue to bleat about unemployment in the 1930s that was 25% and today it is only 9.1%. In the 1930s U3 was 25.2% and U6 was 37.6%. Today U3 is 9.1%, U6 is 16.3% and if you extract the birth/death ratio it is 22.6%. There were two recoveries in the 1930s, but both aborted. Over the past few years we have seen transitory gains and actually very little result for some \$4.3 trillion in spending. Even so-called conservative economists use government-generated statistics, which they know are bogus. How can they hope to come up with the correct answers for future economic and financial problems? In addition most do not get involved in geopolitics, which severely hampers perspectives and projections. Along those lines those who wish for lower commodity prices are engaging in wishful thinking. Not only do we see fire, draught and floods, but we also see geopolitical dislocation and a flight from stock and bond markets to the safety of commodities, gold and silver. That is not going to end anytime soon.

Economists still see recovery without tariffs, recovery, which always eludes them. For several years workers have worked to a maximum of their ability and they still can compete with the emerging world, due to almost zero interest rates. Employers when confronted with a choice of hiring more employees choose to move the work to offshore locations. Attitudes such as this seal the fate of working Americans.

As you can see corporate America has lost its direction. They have become creatures of internationalism, participating in the extinction of the US and its world reserve currency, the dollar. The culture in corporate America is decidedly corruption augmented by government's drive to implement corporate fascism very reminiscent of Germany and Italy in the 1930s, which was a trial run for today's government.

The world's problem is debt – too much of it. Corporate America, particularly Wall Street, thinks debt creation can go on indefinitely as they continue to loot America. The US economy is doing a slow motion swan dive and the corporatists do not care because they believe they'll become part of this new World Order. What they do not understand is they are stuck in neutral, as they proceed with their looting operations. Worse yet all, or almost all of the gold belonging to America citizens is gone. The US dollar is like so many other fiat currencies. People often ask, what currency should be in and the simple answer is none, except to function from month-to-month. The record is there one for all to see, all currencies have on average lost value versus gold and silver for 11 straight years. What more can be expected as deficits for all countries mount year after year? This is why almost all governments are trapped. They have to continue to create money and credit or their economies will collapse. The problems are still all there. Greece and the other five lame ducks, the euro and the EU. The European banking system is still staring over the abyss. We have no debt extension. 4% of the SPR has been sold with no net effect on the oil price or availability. To refill the salt domes will be very costly, while in the meantime government has more money to waste. While all this transpires the military industrial complex is laughing all the way to the bank.

The result is investors continue to flee to gold and silver albeit in small numbers. All gold and silver investments only aggregate 0.8% of Americans. What will prices be when 15% of Americans become involved, as that number did in 1980? The success of gold and silver are just a direct reflection of monetary profligacy and the debasement of the US dollar. For the past 2-1/2 years gold has taken over as the only real currency and the dollar can only regain status by again backing the currency with gold. After the recent criminal correction in gold, silver and commodities in just three days, as we predicted the losses have been regained. The suppression cartel is losing its power and soon will become a nonentity. Very soon all will see new highs.

The big question is why hasn't government and the Fed tried to solve the economic situation? The answer is they have no intention of doing so, because they want the public on their knees economically and financially so they can impose World Government. We have news for them, this time they are going to lose and lose it all. Yes, there is going to be a great war or a series of wars you won't escape that. These criminals are not going down without a fight and it will be a very nasty struggle.

The banker situation in Greece, that is the rape and looting of the country, is a set piece of what bankers intend to do in all countries.

As we enter the twilight of the American nation we have never been so overwhelmed by the servile incompetence of Congress and its entourage of bureaucrats. We call them team A and team B. As each administration changes the participants change, but their length of service lingers on for many years. They represent the same masters who control

them from behind the scenes with the same mission, but with slightly different approaches in order to make it seem change is being made. A great many of these servants from academia although very bright, never had an original thought in their life, never have worked in the business world and all are disciples of John Maynard Keynes and his corporatist fascist philosophy. Is it any wonder our nation is in the state it is in?

These are the same geniuses who created massive increases of money and credit starting 11 years ago, only to cap it off with QE1 and QE2 and stimulus 1 and 2, that have only served to rescue an insolvent financial sector and a corrupt insolvent government, which is still in progress. Wall Street and banking have been treated to massive amounts of money supplied by American citizens, who have seen their life savings foreclosed on. They borrow from the Fed at almost zero percent interest rates to invest in higher yielding bets, and wild speculation in totally rigged, manipulated markets. Just to show you how Wall Street's rigged game works a number of major firms go for months without having a losing trading day. That is impossible unless the game is rigged, which it is for certain elitist, Illuminist corporations. These profit centers are created to offset the massive losses sustained in bad loans, mortgagees and from other speculations. Banks were leveraged 70 to 1 on average. It is now 20 to 40 to one, up from a normal 9 to 1. As a result government sees only 20% of its debt offerings being bought by Americans and foreigners. The remainder is being bought by the Federal Reserve, which for the most part creates money and credit out of thin air to meet these needs.

Bob Chapman is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [7:35 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Friday, July 8, 2011

[Michael Payne: If American Exceptionalism Were a Reality](#)

If American Exceptionalism Were a Reality: Here's What Life in America Would Be Like

by Michael Payne [article link](#)

July 07, 2011 | Information Clearing House

I occasionally hear someone in the news speak of "American Exceptionalism", the theory that the United States is qualitatively different from other nations; that we are unique among nations and generally superior to them in almost any measurable category. That's a nice thought but it's just not reality. That's not to say that it cannot be attained at some future time. So, let's discuss what America would be like if this nation could truly be called exceptional.

That America would resemble the one that existed after the Second World War when people felt really good about themselves. Tom Brokaw even wrote a book about Americans of that time and coined the term, the "Greatest Generation." During those times, the future was bright, and the sky was the limit; everything was looking up as the nation entered an era of what was anticipated to be an indefinite period of peace and prosperity.

That generation had the opportunity, and the potential, to lead the nation in exactly that direction and it did, for a time, but then a succession of wars and military actions interrupted those hopes and dreams. But what if America had not taken that turn in the wrong direction? Let's attempt to describe a future America as it might have been initially envisioned by those in the 1950's as they contemplated how America could evolve into an exceptional nation and society.

The America that they envisioned would be a prosperous country with a robust economy. The American dream would be in effect with lots of upward mobility for all citizens. There would be plenty of wealthy people, a vibrant, hard-working middle class and, yes, we'd have a lower income class -- but it would not be nearly as large and disadvantaged as that of today.

The distribution of wealth between the classes would be balanced, it wouldn't be a situation such as we find today in which most analyses show that the top 1% own about 35% of total wealth, the next 19% own 50% and the bottom 80% own only 15%. No, it would be much more fair and balanced than that because of a system of taxation that our government had created to make certain that every person in America, regardless of their income, paid their fair share; tax breaks, unnecessary incentives and loopholes, together with offshore tax evasion accounts, by corporations and the wealthy would have been eliminated.

There would be a thriving manufacturing sector because the Congress would have set up a system of tax incentives and penalties, plus appropriate tariffs that created millions of new jobs in America, and minimized overseas outsourcing. Corporations and workers would have reasonably good relationships, not perfect, but civil. Workers would earn good wages and CEO's would be very well paid but nothing like their salaries today which often are 700 times greater those of their workers.

Our government and the business community would have recognized that petroleum would certainly become much more scarce and expensive in the future and they would have worked together to create and develop new sources of alternate energy such as solar, wind, geothermal, and biofuels. The new industries and their energy saving products would fuel the consumer-driven economy, increase the nation's exports dramatically and, once again, make American manufacturing a force in the world.

In that America we would have a superior, well funded education system as we did in the past. Our students would be proficient in math and science, and would place very high in world academic rankings, far better than that of today where we rank 21st in math, 25th in mathematics and 15% in reading literacy among the industrialized nations. Teachers would no longer be prime targets for layoffs by Republican governors and they would restore our educational foundations.

The nation would have a universal health care system that covered every citizen from birth to death. It would be a single payer system as effective as those of all of the other industrialized nations of the world. The massive health care industry, with its monumental profits derived from constant increases in premiums, would be phased out. Americans would no longer be going bankrupt as a result of astronomical health care bills. The Congress and the president would have initiated this great change as they fully realized that health care for all Americans were a basic right.

The nation's infrastructure would rank with the best in the world, not 23rd as it does today. Our interstates, roads, highways, bridges and waterways would be well maintained. There would be far fewer over-the-road trucks on our highways and fewer automobiles. There would be efficient, affordable public transportation, greatly increased railroad traffic, high speed trains between cities and even bullet trains, say from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. We would see a significant movement to electric and hybrid cars; huge SUV's and V-8's would become totally obsolete.

Wall Street and our financial systems would be stable and growing, based upon reasonable and appropriate rules and regulations instituted by Congress to prevent abusive and manipulative practices. Many of the financial crooks and manipulators would be in prison after our Justice Department, at the president's urging, would have been investigated and prosecuted them. As a result home foreclosures and related personal bankruptcies due to illegal and manipulative mortgage practices would no longer be a problem.

Congress would be a place where the interests of the people were paramount, where Corporate America had no more influence, where one party could not block legislation or presidential appointments; there would be no such thing as a filibuster as the Congress would have overhauled the legislative rules. Presidential and congressional election campaigns would be six months long, they would be financed by public funds; corporate contributions would be illegal and all voting would be done by paper ballots with audit trails to prevent abuse.

There would still be a threat of terror in the world but America would address it by a combination of intelligence agencies, Special Forces and highly sophisticated electronic surveillance systems. Gone would be the vast military empire and its hundreds of bases. The annual defense budget would be about one third of what it had been at its peak of \$1.3 trillion. America would have a real Defense Department not one that specialized in offensive military actions around the world.

There would be three political parties in America and a new breed of politicians that would have no need for monetary ties to corporations because of newly instituted campaign finance reforms; our elected representatives in Washington would be free to enact legislation in the best interests of the people. Corporate America would no longer own the Congress and call the shots. Corporations would assume their proper place as a driving force in the new economy.

And last and best of all there would be an American president with courage and strong moral beliefs that could not be cowed by the military or beholden to Corporate America and lobbyist organizations; a new breed of president who understood that war was a last resort, not to be launched by pre-emptive strikes and invasions of sovereign nations. This

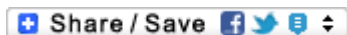
would be a president who put the interests of the American people above all, listened to their views and responded to their needs and problems.

We need to contrast the America that I'm portraying here with the America of today. Quite a bit different, aren't they? Many might say that the exceptional America I'm describing is a totally unrealistic supposition at best, that it sounds like some kind of Utopian society in which everything would be perfection. No, what I'm describing is not perfection; it is simply how a stable, responsible society would be expected to function if its government had put its priorities in the proper order, with the needs and interests of the American people at the top of the list.

I'm describing the America that might have been.

Michael Payne is an independent progressive who writes articles about domestic social and political matters as well as American foreign policy. He is a U.S. Army veteran.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:27 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Thursday, July 7, 2011

[Szandor Blestman: War, the Sickness of Empire and Economic Genocide](#)

War, the Sickness of Empire and Economic Genocide

by Szandor Blestman [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 04, 2011 | Silver Bear Cafe | Szandor Blestman

I've made the claim for some time now that the economy is people. It's you and me trading goods and services on a voluntary basis. It's me providing you with my labor or something I've created, then you providing him with your labor or something you've created, then him providing her with his labor or something he's created and so on and so forth. This is what makes economy, so it would make sense that the economy would grow as the population grows. It would make sense that the economy would shrink as the population shrinks. It would make sense that the economy would stabilize when the population stabilizes. But this is not what has happened. I believe this is at least partially because some people have been able to manipulate the mechanisms of economy in unnatural ways for their own benefit, and therefore to the detriment of most others.

One way this can be accomplished is through war. It has been said that war is the health of the state. Certainly it has been shown through history that nothing grows the power of a central government better than war. But while war may help the machinations of the state, it does not do the same for the economy. Instead, it takes resources that would be better spent on other ventures and uses them to destroy lives and property. Yes, it might help enrich certain individuals and corporations and those who work for them, but in the end it is a drain on resources and kills the very people who could help grow the economy through peaceful, mutually beneficial trade.

This might be something that many Americans in particular might find hard to accept. The population of that nation has not had to deal with the horrors of war upon the citizenry for almost a hundred and fifty years. The wars their government has engaged in have more or less been profitable to them. World War I helped its economy as it remained neutral and provided arms to the combatants before they entered it in 1917. World War II provided American industry with many opportunities before the Japanese attacked near the end of 1941. The industrial might of America was unrivaled coming out of World War II and the adoption of the dollar as the world's reserve currency created a military, industrial and financial super power unmatched in the world's history. War seemed to be good for America.

Yet the nation's populace seemed to remain ignorant as to the true nature of its perceived wealth. The wars its government has engaged in have been paid for by borrowing, not by using money that had been saved. The resources that may have helped pay for wars have in reality been stolen from indigenous populations at the point of a gun. These resources certainly weren't acquired through voluntary trade. These debts need to be paid back in some form or another, the question is by whom? I certainly don't believe it should be by the common folk who may have tacitly gone along with the war programs but did not orchestrate them. Yet it is the common folk who will pay because of the fiscal and political manipulations of the super wealthy elite who continue to hide and obfuscate their influence in such matters.

The debts are coming due. Those who have loaned the money, regardless of whether or not paper money has any real value, want to be paid back. There is a problem, however, in that the nation is technically bankrupt. And it's not just the United States of America that has this problem, but many nations worldwide take in less revenue than they spend and can no longer afford to pay back even the interest on the loans they've received from various lenders. To solve this problem, governments often feel they can do two things, either raise taxes or cut spending. The United States government has for years decided to put the burden on the backs of their future generations by printing money and inflating the currency supply. I think a better solution would be to stop wasting money on bullets, bombs and engines of destruction. I think it is a good time to stop policing an empire, start closing down bases and bringing home troops, and use the trillions that would be saved by not empire building to pay off the debt and start rebuilding prosperity and wealth.

Yet this is not something that the central banking institutions would have. They wish to keep the common folk in debt. They wish to siphon off the unprecedented wealth that has been enjoyed by the largest and most powerful middle class the world has ever known and hoard it in their own coffers. Why not do this by bombing already impoverished people? Why not destroy the infrastructure of nations that are on their way up the socio-economic ladder? Why not use fear, ignorance and the inherent distrust of other cultures to foment a clash of civilizations? In this way, they can keep the wealthier nation in debt and dependent on their good graces and at the same time steal the natural resources of less fortunate nations through the international corporations they control. Why should they care if innocents are killed along the way, as long as their pockets are lined and their coffers filled?

War of any kind does not bring economic prosperity to the masses. It does not bring freedom, liberty or democracy to the people. It brings only death and destruction, the exact opposite of economic prosperity. It brings complete moral degradation. It brings about the enslavement of the masses in one form or another to all the parties involved. It brings about unprecedented profits for a few societal parasites who wish to hoard all the wealth for themselves. It brings prosperity only to the fat spiders at the top who spin their webs to entrap all humanity so they can feed upon the misery they create. It is these few wealthy elite who seem to wish for the destruction of all economy who should be held to account, not the common folk. It is they who have failed miserably, for they have shown their utter disdain for humankind and the desperate emotional impoverishment they wallow in when it comes to caring for the less fortunate.

Peace is the way to economic prosperity. Individual freedom is the way to peace. Only by creating and producing will the economy grow, not through killing and destroying. How much more can mankind endure before this lesson is learned? It is time to stop empowering the elite who pull the strings. It is time to stop borrowing their worthless paper money for wars and other destructive government programs they have set up to entrap the masses of humanity. It is time to create alternatives to the monopolies of currency they control and to allow these alternatives to operate unmolested by the government agencies that the wealthy corporate elite have bought and paid for. It is time to stop forcing our empire and corporate world government upon the masses of the world and to start allowing all individuals to operate as the sovereign beings they are. Americans should be leading by example, not by the heavy handed machinations of a militarized police force.

We have seen this sickness before in the world. We have seen historically how empire corrupts and rots away the core of the principles that brought it into being. We have seen how power corrupts and how absolute power corrupts absolutely. It is time for the common folk to shout "Enough!" It is time we refuse to pay for the destruction any longer. It is time to trim back the branches of empire, break the grip of government monopoly and rid ourselves of the tyranny that is now encamped upon our shores. When this happens, the buds of freedom can grow again and perhaps one day blossom into beautiful flowers. When this happens, prosperity will once again visit the common folk and we can all build wealth together.

Szandor Blestman: My archived articles are available at szandorblestman.com. Please visit there and make a donation to help support me and my efforts. I also have an ebook available entitled "[The Ouijiers](#)" by Matthew Wayne.

The Silver Bear Cafe [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:33 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Robert Scheer: The Tea Party and Goldman Sachs

The Tea Party and Goldman Sachs: A Love Story

by Robert Scheer [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 6, 2011 | CommonDreams | TruthDig

Face it. We live in two nations, sharply divided by an enormous economic chasm between the super-rich and everyone else. This should be an obvious fact of life for most Americans. Just read the story in Tuesday's Wall Street Journal headlined "Profits Thrive in Weak Recovery." Or the recent New York Times story pointing out "that the median pay for top executives at 200 big companies last year was \$10.8 million," a 23 percent gain over the year before.

In the midst of a jobless recovery, those same corporations are sitting on more than \$2 trillion in reserves, refusing to invest in this country, as increasing percentages of their profits are garnered in tax-sheltered operations abroad. And the bankers who caused the economic meltdown have turned against President Barack Obama, who saved them; instead they favor a tea-party-dominated Republican Party that seeks to limit any restraint on corporate greed while destroying the ability of state and federal governments to bring some measure of relief to ordinary folk.

The whole point of the tea party is to focus concern over our stagnant economy on something called "big government" while ignoring the big corporations that have bought the government as an accessory to their marketing strategies. Big government is big precisely because it now exists primarily to make the world safe for multinational capitalism, whether through a bloated defense budget, trade pacts like the North American Free Trade Agreement, or monetary policies that serve the interests of the largest companies.

It was their lobbyists who got Congress to end sensible regulations of financial shenanigans, and now, with the new tea party members of Congress as their most stalwart allies, they are yanking the teeth from the very mild regulations that Obama got through the last Congress. As The Associated Press reported: "Congressional Republicans are greeting the one-year anniversary of President Barack Obama's financial overhaul law by trying to weaken it, nibble by nibble."

It is nothing short of demagogic for the Republicans to be complaining about the debt when it was the radical deregulatory policies that they pursued which caused all that governmental red ink in the first place. What a hoax to pretend that teachers' pensions or environmental protections are responsible for a debt that increased by 50 percent as a direct consequence of the banking collapse. Yet they want to gut even the tepid regulations that became law under the Obama administration, foaming at the mouth about sensible regulation as job killing when it is the uncontrolled greed of Wall Street that is at the root of our high unemployment.

Congressional Republicans are cutting funding for the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission as if those already underfunded agencies are centers of anti-business radicalism. The CFTC is run by former Goldman Sachs partner Gary Gensler, who, back when he was in the Clinton Treasury Department serving under another onetime Goldman leader, Robert Rubin, teamed up with Republicans in Congress to gut financial regulation. He is one of the Obama regulators who has managed to delay even the minor controls that the Dodd-Frank law requires for the still wildly out-of-control \$600 trillion derivatives market.

What a joke that the tea party assertion that radicals have taken over the Obama government is embraced even by lobbyists for Goldman Sachs, whose former executives have populated the Obama administration as widely as they did the two previous administrations. All they are missing this time around is that they didn't get to have one of their own named as treasury secretary, as was the case in both the Clinton and Bush cabinets.

This week, the Los Angeles Times reported on Goldman's renewed lobbying efforts in Washington aimed at watering down what remains of the promise of Dodd-Frank. True to Washington tradition, Goldman has hired Michael Paese, a former top staffer for the "liberal" Rep. Barney Frank to head its Washington operation, which last year spent \$4.6 million lobbying Congress to soften the bill, a task now made far easier with Goldman's tea party allies in the new Republican-dominated House. As the Times noted, "Goldman has spent much of its money on hired guns from major Washington lobbying firms, including former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and former House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.)."

Between the faux populism of the tea party and the army of sellout ex-congressional staffers and politicians from both parties, the Washington fix is in. Short of hitting it big on a lottery ticket, the vast majority of Americans are sentenced to a future of lowered expectations, insurmountable personal debt and dismal job prospects.

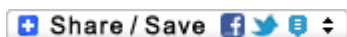
They may not know it, however, thanks to the constant propaganda from a corporate culture dominated by images of a classless nation in which all consume the delights of the American dream, from the perfect smartphone to the perfect pill for bladder control, while merrily hacking away on the perfectly manicured golf course of one's fantasies.

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Wednesday, July 6, 2011

[Shamus Cooke: How to Save the U.S. Labor Movement](#)

How to Save the U.S. Labor Movement

by Shamus Cooke [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 5, 2011 | Global Research | Workers Action

The first step in saving the labor movement is recognizing that it needs saving. Sadly, many union leaders -- including Richard Trumka of the AFL-CIO -- refuse to accept this reality, choosing instead to dismiss the current threats against labor unions as "exaggerated," or limited to this or that Republican politician. In fact, the labor movement -- especially public sector unions -- is facing nationwide attacks by Democrats and Republicans alike.

On a state-by-state basis unions are being blamed for the budget deficits that are the result of the Great Recession -- itself triggered by Wall Street and fueled by declining taxes on corporations and the rich. This massive recession is certain to create deficits for years to come, guaranteeing that the cross-hairs will remain firmly on the backs of labor unions, since the backs of the corporations escaped the cross-hairs by their domination of the two party system and media. This anti-union atmosphere will thus grow, and will soon affect all unions, much like high unemployment has already weakened all unions by pushing down wages and lowering union membership. And union membership is already drastically low: with 7 percent private sector unemployment, unions are already facing near extinction. The attack on the public sector, if successful, will completely destroy the power of unions in relation to the power of corporations. Labor's diminishing clout is already recognized by politicians of both parties; indeed, the current attacks would not be happening if it were otherwise. Big business now has undisputed and complete control over both parties. The New York Times reports: "The reality is that the U.S. labor movement has steadily lost influence, politically, socially and economically. Labor believes that President Barack Obama is taking it too much for granted; he is." ([March 7, 2011](#)).

A recent member of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) International Executive Board, Stephen Lerner, was more blunt when he spoke at Pace University: "Unions are almost dead. We cannot survive doing what we do."

It is in this context that solutions must be proposed, debated, and pursued. Labor unions do not need genius-caliber ideas or fancy gimmicks to save themselves; there are numerous practical, common sense solutions that could be implemented immediately. Below are six:

1) Go on the offensive. No struggle of any kind can be won on a purely defensive basis. Yet many labor unions seem content with continually fending off corporate attackers, taking steps backwards as they do so, since waging defensive campaigns uses precious union resources. Purely defensive campaigns imply weakness, since a powerful organization would choose to use its resources in a more empowering way. Concessionary bargaining is a prime example of unions not flexing their muscle, and sadly, it's become the new norm for many unions, which weaken themselves further with every new concession-filled contract. The union movement will not be able to grow significantly as long as it persists in concessionary bargaining. Who would want to join a union and pay dues if the results are progressively worse contracts?

Labor unions are capable of conjuring powerful social forces when they do go on the offensive. Oregon unions decided to mobilize in favor of a Tax the Rich and Corporation measure that would reduce the state deficit: union members flocked to phone banks and door-to-door canvassing, winning over the community with a landslide election victory that saved hundreds of millions of dollars in social service cuts. The events in Wisconsin proved that unions would have tremendous community support to go on the offensive against the anti-democracy Governor Walker. The non-union working class in Wisconsin correctly viewed the unions' fight as a battle against the status-quo, and they wanted to join.

2) Mobilize the community. One of the biggest mistakes unions have made over the years has been to disconnect themselves from the community. Unions became insular organizations unconcerned with organizing new members or fighting for working people in general, mistakes that can easily be remedied by reversing course. The media is focused on demonizing unions in the eyes of the broader working class, but unions can fight back by waging real campaigns to save Social Security, Medicare, or other national programs like food stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and especially addressing unemployment. Fighting for the unemployed by demanding a public works program would boost the image of unions in the eyes of working people nationwide. The union movement cannot win by itself; it is too small. SEIU has recognized this in their fledgling campaign called Fight For a Fair Economy. But a truly successful campaign would require that all unions become involved.

3) Re-unite the labor movement. It is long overdue for the Change to Win unions and the AFL-CIO to reunite. The progressive vision of the Change to Win unions did not materialize; the labor movement as a whole is weaker because of this divide. New campaigns need to be organized on a national basis, with all unions directing their energy in a coordinated fashion. If the major unions all wage separate campaigns they are doomed to failure.

4) Political Independence. Union leaders should realize that the Democrats don't want to be friends anymore. How many betrayals must it take? The Democrats are attacking teachers' unions across the country on the state level with "education reforms" that disempower union seniority and create non-union charter schools. On the national level Obama's anti-union

Race to the Top education reforms is a blatantly anti-union continuation of Bush's No Child Left Behind program. Democratic governors across the country are passing "cuts only" budgets at the expense of labor unions and working people while refusing to raise taxes on the rich or close corporate loopholes.

Some labor leaders refuse to mobilize their members against these attacks because union members were mobilized to campaign for these governors only months before! The same is true for President Obama, who received hundreds of millions of dollars from the unions for his election campaign and gave virtually nothing in return. Will Obama's new promises in 2012 fool labor leaders once again or will they engage in self-deception? Sadly, the nation's largest teachers union, the NEA, has pledged to support Obama's next campaign. It is terribly demoralizing for union members to watch the candidate they endorsed attack their wages and benefits. The electoral strategy has failed -- miserably. Union resources can be used in a multitude of productive ways instead of funding their attackers' electoral campaigns.

5) Powerful slogans. Union leaders cannot inspire their members to be active in boring campaigns or by using watered down demands. To win any campaign unions need to be able to mobilize their members and the community. This effort requires that unions re-learn how to agitate around important issues while proposing real solutions. The Great Recession is posing this question starkly before the labor movement: how will labor unions fight back against the powerful corporate offensive that was unleashed with the collapse of the economy? How will unions save their members' benefits while creating jobs for the community at large, when the media claims "there is no money?" Again, no radical solutions are needed. National Nurses United has already come up with the solution: make Wall Street pay! Tax the rich and corporations!

All the labor movement has to do is point to the historically high levels of income inequality and demand that the rich and corporations be taxed to pay for the recession that they caused. No other sector of society can afford to pay for this recession. Unions must point out that taxes on the rich have decreased dramatically over the past three decades, causing these massive deficits. A national campaign to tax the rich and corporations has the capacity to mobilize all working people so that the national and state budget deficits can be fixed -- without slashing Social Security and Medicare -- while a massive public works campaign can be started to create millions of jobs.

6) Take back the streets. None of the pressing social issues of most concern to working people can be addressed by politicians of the Democrat and Republican parties. We've entered a period where politics are being transferred to the streets, where politicians can only be influenced by the implied threat inherent in massive demonstrations, rallies, and mobilized communities. The power demonstrated in Wisconsin showed clearly the direction that labor unions need to go if they want to avoid extinction; the tactics of the last thirty years must be renounced and the strategies of the labor movement's birth must be reclaimed. The massive power that labor unions accumulated up through the 1940's by waging aggressive campaigns in the streets and workplaces was frittered away in consequent decades by union leaders content with making backroom deals with politicians. Labor can either be a friend or feared by the corporate elite, it can't be both.

The initiative to implement these common sense proposals must come first and foremost from rank and file members, since they have suffered the most from the current failed strategy and tactics adopted by top union officials. The rank and file must put unrelenting pressure on the officials to change course and begin to put up a real fight in defense of the membership. If the officials do not respond, then the rank and file can exercise their democratic rights and take appropriate action.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org). He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:00 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Rex Weyler: Deep Green: Why De-Growth?

Deep Green is Rex Weyler's monthly column, reflecting on the roots of activism, environmentalism, and Greenpeace's past, present, and future. The opinions here are his own.

Deep Green: Why De-Growth? An interview

by Rex Weyler [article link](#) [article link](#)

July 05, 2011 | Countercurrents | Greenpeace

“GDP, the so-called measure of economic growth, does not separate costs from benefits.”

- Herman Daly, World Bank Economist, author of “Steady State Economics.”

In 2008, economists and scientists met in Paris to discuss “Economic Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity.” The Degrowth (Décroissance) movement grew from this economic revolution in France. In 2010, a similar conference convened in Barcelona. For the last two years I have helped organize the Degrowth Conference in Vancouver, Canada. Journalists and traditional economists have asked why a degrowth movement is necessary. Here are answers to their questions:

Why focus on ending growth? Isn't growth natural?

Yes, growth is natural, but even in nature, growth is limited.

The Degrowth movement addresses the growth of human consumption, driven by economic growth, population growth, and the impacts of resource extraction – oil spills, polluted rivers, atmospheric carbon. System feedbacks such as melting permafrost and methane releases, add to the impact. We can call aggregate human consumption and waste “throughput.”

We now hear talk of “decoupling” economic growth from material and energy throughput, which would be desirable, but we must be realistic because we possess very few actual examples of such decoupling. Historically, economic growth leads to increased energy and materials throughput. For example, some people once claimed that computers would “save paper” but this did not happen. Human society today uses six-times more paper than we did in 1960. Computers accelerated economic growth, and although this yielded benefits to certain sectors of society, the growth required more consumption, ecological devastation, and social inequity.

But don't we want certain economic sectors to grow, like renewable energy and developing economies?

Yes. But to achieve ecological balance and social justice, we need to respect the limits nature places on material and energy throughput. A social transition can take place without total system growth, but even solar panels and windmills require materials and energy, rare-earth metals, copper, steel, silicon and so forth. We don't mine copper or silicon with solar energy, we mine them with hydrocarbons.

We need to appreciate the magnitude of the transitions we contemplate. Today, the rich 15-percent of Earth's people consume about 85-percent of the resources. Meanwhile, our population grows and nations expect their economies to grow by 3-to-4-percent annually. Projecting these growth rates to 2050, a world of 9 billion people with social justice and better living standards, powered with renewable energy would require about 30-times more resources than we consume today. We would be fair and wise to ask: Is that possible?

Furthermore, energy systems – windmills, solar arrays, dams – have fixed life-spans, so even if we built enough renewable energy to power a world of 9 billion people, that infrastructure would have to be built again, and again, forever, to be “sustainable.” In nature, desire does not equal capacity. We have to start with Earth's capacity and design our cultural transition based on that capacity.

Therefore, the key policy of any ecological energy plan must be conservation, the only solution that does not require material growth. Conservation has to start with wealthy nations. If rich consumers reduced energy consumption by half – possible since rich economies waste so much energy – then the rest of the world could double energy use, and we could still reduce total world energy use. But if we attempt to power the wasteful, consumer culture built on fossil fuel for 9-billion people, we encounter some inconvenient laws of physics, thermodynamics, and ecology.

But can we not become more efficient through innovation?

Yes, but we will need to question our assumptions. Historically, humans have made millions of industrial efficiency gains without reducing consumption. When society achieves efficiency with a resource, it becomes cheaper, so we tend to use more, not less. This phenomenon, documented by William Jevons during the coal era, is known in economics as the rebound effect. Efficiency could reduce consumption, but humanity has a poor track record of doing so. Historically, efficiency gains increased profits or reduced consumer costs, but do not save resources. We can change this but we should not be naive.

But growth is a natural biological and evolutionary impulse.

Yes, growth is not innately evil. However, growth is not innately “good,” and can become destructive even in nature. When our cells don’t stop growing, we have cancer; if our bodies don’t stop growing, that is obesity. Successful species grow until they overshoot their habitat capacity. Growth can become a liability.

Throughout history, certain dominant societies grew until they depleted their habitats. A few learned to simplify, degrow, and endure. Modern advocates of degrowth are not against social diversity or innovation. The degrowth movement is simply cautioning society about the historic link between economic growth and ecosystem destruction. Wishful thinking won’t change this.

Diversity and complexity grow continuously. Does Nature really have a limit on growth?

The word “growth” does not mean the same thing in different contexts. Non-material qualities – species diversity, innovation, or human ideas – can “grow,” but this is quite different from the growth of material things such as populations, cell phones, or power plants.

Even non-physical qualities – beauty, love – require physical foundations with limits. Nature can produce five species of finches or fifty species but nature imposes limits on the total biomass of finches, or forests, humans, or human technical artefacts. Forests reach a limit that we call “maturity,” at which point the forest reaches dynamic homeostasis, roughly stable biomass with shifting diversity.

Humans can create virtually unlimited musical styles, but only a limited number of maple cellos with ebony fingerboards. A biophysical supply chain makes “non-material” social innovation possible. Dreaming up innovations may require near-zero material throughput, but the practical application of those innovations requires energy and materials.

The infrastructure of knowledge – education, books, Internet, conferences – that nurture an environment of ideas, requires throughput. For this reason, cultures that have dominated in technical innovation also dominated in resource consumption. The Internet may feel like “free” information but requires massive materials, energy, and waste sinks. Growth of difference (diversity) is not the same as growth of stuff. We’ll need to be precise about claims that economic growth can avoid throughput growth.

But the biosphere has grown its energy and material throughput for billions of years with no sign of stopping.

This needs to be qualified for two reasons: Growth rates and natural collapse events.

Nature's growth rates remain tiny compared to human economies. Nations typically attempt to grow their economies at 3-4-percent annually. Since about 1750, this equates to a doubling of human consumption every 20 years. On the other hand, over the last 500-million years, Earth's biomass has doubled about every 50 million years, 2-million-times slower than

human economic and consumption growth. Growth is natural, but not anywhere near the rate that bankers and neoclassical economists want economies to grow.

Secondly, collapse appears frequently in the fossil record and in human history. Biological diversity reached capacity limits not only during the famous "five extinctions" but in thousands of minor extinctions. About 600-million-years-ago (mya), free oxygen allowed cells to extract more energy from the ecosystem, unleashing tremendous diversity growth. However, this growth reached habitat limits many times between 550mya and 200mya, as species diversity crashed, recovered, and crashed again. Growth does stop in nature, and reverses. The rate of [diversity growth peaked](#) during the Cambrian era, 550-500mya, and has not been equalled since. Diversity is not a one-way progression; it grows, stutters, collapses, and recovers based on environmental capacity and conditions.

Today, human sprawl reduces Earth's biological diversity. Humans occupy and impact habitats, replacing and obliterating species. If natural growth was unlimited, then these other species could survive human expansion, but human expansion fills and depletes ecosystems, exposing nature's limits.

Likewise, we witness cultural diversity growth and simultaneous cultural loss. Industrial growth has diminished cultural diversity as well as species diversity. Historical anthropologist Joseph Tainter has shown that when societies grow, they inevitably face problems related to habitat capacity. To solve these problems, they develop new technologies, but these solutions tend to create new problems (irrigation causes salinization, nuclear energy causes leukemia, and so forth.) Highly complex societies eventually experience "diminishing returns" on their innovations, which Tainter explains in [The Collapse of Complex Societies](#). A few societies overcame this dilemma by simplifying their systems, but most overshot their habitat and collapsed. Growth is not a solution for societies in overshoot. Rather, solutions to overshoot involve reduced consumption, simplification, and a return to fundamental rules of ecology.

Human social complexity has grown over the last 100,000 years, punctuated with collapses and ecosystem decline. Human success clearly incurs ecological and social costs. Economist Kenneth Boulding called these ecological and cultural losses the "metabolic costs" of growth. Donella Meadows, and others simply pointed out the "Limits to Growth." Since human impact now threatens global ecosystem balance, we don't know if human complexity will continue to grow.

Degrowth advocates suggest that the best strategy to ensure maximum human diversity is to stabilize our consumption and expansion. Dynamic homeostasis, nature's genuine sustainability, makes demands on growing things, and simplicity proves as important as complexity. The notion of degrowth is not intended to destroy human society, but to preserve it.

If our growth economy recycles as nature does, are we not more sustainable?

Yes, of course, but we need to understand nature's costs and limits regarding recycling. Human economies should attempt to approach 100-percent recycling, but recycling itself requires energy and materials. In nature, recycling is a cost of life, not just a solution. The laws of energy transformation teach us that there is no such thing as 100-percent recycling, even in nature, because of these throughput costs.

Attacking growth is counter-productive because people expect growth, and want to find hope.

In the autumn, when leaves fall and the air turns cold, it is not "pessimism" to point out that winter is coming. If hope is delusional, it is futile.

The degrowth movement does not "attack" growth, which has its appropriate place in nature. The degrowth movement simply exposes the pretence of celebrating the benefits of economic growth while ignoring the costs. Rich nations typically ignore the costs of growth by exporting those costs to poor nations and to nature: Sending city garbage to the country, dumping toxic waste at sea, exploiting workers to make products cheap, and devastating the landscape in resource mining.

A large portion of China's CO2 emissions, for example, are really European and American CO2 emissions, because those nations consume the products of that pollution.

Naturally, people resist the idea of limits on their consumption. The instincts to grow were forged in natural evolution, but those instincts don't make limits disappear. Even in non-human nature, instincts can become counter-productive. Aggression, for example, exists because it had survival value, but in certain contexts aggression becomes destructive. When the context changes, instincts can be harmful. Once a species reaches its habitat limits, the instincts to grow and expand become a liability.

Aren't ecosystems destroyed just as thoroughly in poor nations as wealthy ones.

Yes, but usually because those nations are plundered and exploited by the rich. Sheer numbers of inhabitants anywhere can deplete an environment, but wealthy-nation industrial expansion is the leading cause of global ecological destruction. Many cultures were sustainable for thousands of years, and could have endured many thousands more, until colonized by industrial nations, which took their resources, took slaves, waged war, practiced genocide, and so forth. In the industrial era, rich nations export destructive resource extraction, waste disposal, and social costs to the poor nations. Africa is not ecologically depleted and poor because Africans consumed too much stuff; it is depleted and poor because Europe and North America plundered it to fuel their economic growth. Now, China, Japan, and other industrialized nations have joined the plunder of poor nations and the global commons. Nature limits population growth, but for humanity, wealthy consumption and economic growth remain the primary causes of ecological destruction.

Rather than degrowth, should we not focus on preserving ecosystems?

If our social, political, and economic planners actually understood ecosystems, we might avoid a lot of problems we face.

But degrowth is not just a rallying cry or a trivial idea. Degrowth is an important, natural concept that our society needs to understand, whether we call it Degrowth, Limits to Growth, Costs of Complexity, Overshoot, Carrying Capacity, Metabolic Costs, Diminishing Returns on Innovation, Entropic Limits, "The Meek Shall inherit the Earth," or "Richer lives, simpler means" as Arne Naess said.

The problem for our society is not that these ideas are too complex or wrong, but that they are annoying and inconvenient for the wealthy and powerful. Everyone wants more. Millionaires want to be a billionaires. The more that individuals grab and hoard, the less there is for everyone. On the other hand, as we learn to share and live modestly, our ecosystems can recover and provide us with nature's bounty. The best way for poor nations to avoid deeper poverty is to protect their ecosystems from plunder.

The Degrowth movement advocates richer, more rewarding lives with less material stuff. Our economic efforts should focus on providing basic needs to everyone in the human family, rather than enriching a few, while others starve. Beyond basic necessities, happiness does not come from consuming more stuff. Happiness comes from friends, family, community, creativity, leisure, love, companionship, and time spent in nature. These things can grow without much material throughput. These are the qualities of life we should be helping to grow.

This may be the most important public dialogue of this century. And we better get this right, because humanity may not get many more chances.

Rex Weyler was a director of the original Greenpeace Foundation, the editor of the organisation's first newsletter, and a co-founder of Greenpeace International in 1979. He was a photographer and reporter on the early Greenpeace whale and seal campaigns, and has written one of the best and most comprehensive histories of the organisation, *Greenpeace* (Raincoast, 2004). His book, *Blood of the Land*, a history of the American Indian Movement, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Deep Green is Rex's monthly column, reflecting on the roots of activism, environmentalism, and Greenpeace's past, present, and future.

Useful resources:

Degrowth Research: [Recherche & Décroissance](#).

Albert Bartlett on Exponential Growth: “[Arithmetic, Population, and Energy](#)” video lecture.

William Catton, [Overshoot](#).

Donella Meadows, et. al., [Limits to Growth](#) (D. H. Meadows, D. L. Meadows, J. Randers, W. Behrens, 1972; New American Library, 1977).

Herman Daly, [Steady-State Economics](#) (1977, 1991).

Mark Anielski: [Genuine Wealth](#).

Lourdes Beneria, [Gender, Development and Globalization](#): Economics as if People Mattered.

Kenneth Boulding, [The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth](#), 1966.

Ivan Illich, [Energy and Equity](#), 1973, Le Monde also discusses the negative social and ecological impact of high-energy society.

Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, [The Entropy Law and the Economic Process](#), (1971).

T. Gutowski, et. al. (“[Thermodynamic Analysis of Resources Used in Manufacturing Processes](#),”(PDF) Environ. Sci. Technol. 43(5) pp1584-1590, 2009).

K. De Decker, (2009) “[The Monster Footprint of Digital Technology](#)” tracks the embodied energy and material resources of silicon based technology.

Arne Naess, [Ecology, community and lifestyle](#).

Wendell Berry, [Solving for Pattern, on appropriate solutions](#) (PDF).

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Tuesday, July 5, 2011

Understand The Corporate Tools Used To Control Us



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... Neither Be Partaker Of Other Men's Sins



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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:25 AM](#) [0 comments](#) [✉](#)

Monday, July 4, 2011

Linda Wagner Schmoldt: 'We the People' or 'I the Person'?

'We the People' or 'I the Person'?

by Linda Wagner Schmoldt [article link](#)

July 4, 2011 | CommonDreams

There is a concerted effort these days by the powers that be to break down the structures that allow people to come together.

It is no accident that we see the Supreme Court taking rights and power away from groups of citizens and workers while increasing the powers of the ruling class and corporations. On state and federal levels we see rulings that restrict the formation of unions, negate collective bargaining, and squelch class-action suits.

It is harder and harder to hold public demonstrations and protests as codes, laws, and fees limit where, when and how we can gather. We have lost many of our common spaces--places where we can come together and speak truth to power. The rights of civic/social leaders and organizers are threatened with scrutiny and abuse. Exorbitant prison sentences and fines are imposed on those who gather to protest and/or do civil disobedience. The making of crowd control devices is a strong industry in the U.S. (and in our ally, Israel.) We are becoming a police state and the military is waiting in the wings.

When the news covers demonstrations they always focus on the most radical looking people. They don't show the old women and the families walking peacefully with their children. The media relishes any show of violence or aggression. The message is clear. These people are not like you. People like you don't take to the street and protest. We are taught to fear the masses.

And what shall we gather around? It becomes more and more difficult to sort out truth from lies, especially when the lies are echoed across the corporate-owned media and halls of power. Support for Wiki-leaks, or any other organization that exposes the truth behind what is really going on, is labeled as treason. There is a crack down on whistleblowers.

Terrorist alerts and the nightly news, as a police blotter of all the crimes we need to fear, forces us to stay in our homes, to be suspicious of our neighbors and to be fearful of anyone who differs in skin tone, speech, culture or way of life. Report your neighbors; don't talk to them.

Whole groups of people get labeled as a threat to our security, whether it is gays who want to marry, immigrants who want to earn a fair wage for their labors, teachers and other public "servants" who want to claim the money set aside for their health care or retirement. Our enemies and those we can't trust increase daily.

We are taught that what are most important are our rights as individuals. Our god is free-enterprise, the unchecked, unregulated right to make as much as we like, even at the expense of our society and our earth. We see regulations as a threat to our individual rights to do business and make a profit.

We are urged to think of ourselves first. If I am not old, why should I pay for those on Social Security or Medicare? If I don't have children, why should I care about education? If I'm not gay, not an illegal immigrant, not unemployed, not losing my house, not confronting an unwanted pregnancy...

And when crisis affects me, I will blame myself. I will think I am alone. I will think I have to solve my own problems. I certainly won't blame a broken social system.

Across the world there are huge demonstrations. The powers that be are threatened by masses of people in other countries who force their leaders to put the good of their society ahead of individual and corporate interests. Note the reaction to any resource industry being nationalized. In Venezuela we have spent millions to bring down the popularly-elected Hugo Chavez who has nationalized the oil production and channeled the profits to fund social programs. That's one of the actions that Muammar Gaddafi was threatening to do as well.

Countries or leaders that might want to put their people first are a threat. We constantly hear about the high taxes individuals pay in socialist countries. If we knew the truth we might start to compare how other countries empower their people by meeting their basic needs--that when the needs of the community are put ahead of individual rights, everyone benefits. We are told the myth that the U.S. is number one and do not see the abysmal ranking of our country on meeting social needs.

To those who want to protect their greedy accumulation of wealth and power, We the people (anywhere) are a scary proposition. God forbid that we should come together and discover our commonality and our strength. We might demand education that teaches us to think. We might start to question. We might want transparency in government or demand truth in the media. We might demand justice and equity, a say over our daily lives.

It is effective to keep us isolated. To use wedge issues to keep us divided. To make us think we aren't connected to the rest of the world. To keep us suspicious and fearful. To keep us ignorant. To keep us focused on "I the person."

We, together, are obviously a huge threat, otherwise why is so much effort being expended to keep us apart? Some people this Fourth of July will celebrate their independence and the rights they have as individuals. A few will recognize our interdependence. They realize that we can't do it alone, that we need community and that democracy is about We the People, not I the Person.

Linda Wagner Schmoldt is a "wonderer, wanderer, writer and social agitator" who lives in Portland, Oregon.
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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:56 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Saturday, July 2, 2011

[Katherine M. Acosta: Thank-You For Not "Serving"](#)

Thank-You For Not "Serving"

by Katherine M. Acosta [article link](#)

July 01, 2011 | Countercurrents

Before the parades begin, the flag-waving commences, and the fireworks explode this 4th of July, I want to recognize a large contingent of patriots who help to protect us from terrorism and defend what freedom and democracy we still enjoy. I am speaking of those who decline to enlist or take commissions in our armed forces. My heartfelt thanks go out to all of you from small towns with few employment opportunities, to those who cannot go to college without incurring frightening levels of debt, those who completed college only to enter a bleak jobs market, to the unemployed and under-employed who nevertheless reject military service as a way out of economic troubles. Thank-you for not "serving."

Thank-you for not adding to the 100,000 plus civilian body count in Iraq, a country that never attacked us, had nothing to do with the September 11th tragedy, and harbored no "weapons of mass destruction." Thank-you for not contributing to the post-war oppression of Iraqi women, who, before we "liberated" them, enjoyed more rights and greater access to education than women of any country in that region. Thank-you for not adding to the misery of these besieged people, who before we came crashing violently into their land, had reliable sources of clean water and electricity.

Thank-you for not participating in the daily bloodshed perpetrated against civilians in our name through the bombing of Yemen, drone attacks in Pakistan, and the decades long war in Afghanistan (counting the years we funded the mujahideen against the former Soviet Union.) Thank-you for not bombing rebels in Libya along with their oppressors.

Thank-you for not contributing to the blowback we call “terrorism;” that is, the creation of terrorists in response to our warmongering and imperialism throughout the world. Nothing will do more to protect us from terrorism than refraining from the oppressive and brutal activities that inspire it.

Thank-you for not participating, directly or indirectly, in the torture of other human beings. Thank-you for not joining organizations (i.e., our armed forces) that flout the Geneva conventions. Adhering to these rules protects our own troops as much as it does “enemy combatants.” Thank-you for not aiding and abetting “extraordinary rendition” – our ghastly euphemism for the practice of farming out the torture of those we capture to other countries.

Thank-you for not aiding the incarceration of prisoners of war, scooped up on random battlefields, some combatants, some unlucky bystanders, who will never be given a trial and either convicted or proven innocent. The justification and normalization of indefinite detention for foreigners will eventually be used against Americans. The reflective patriot understands this.

Thank-you for not becoming what General Smedley Butler called “gangsters for capitalism” in his 1935 book, *War Is A Racket*. He wrote:

I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.

Thanks to those of you who did not provide “service” to oil companies during the invasion of Iraq by rushing first to secure the oil fields. Thank-you for not enabling the exploitation of Iraq’s oil for the benefit of multinational corporations, the destruction of Afghanistan in pursuit of strategic positions along gas pipeline routes, and the illegal war on Libya, which happens to have the largest oil reserves in Africa.

Thank-you for thinking critically about our government’s stated goals and objectives. Critical thinking is crucial for a viable democracy. By resisting the propaganda and questioning our government’s policies, you protect our democracy more than those who blindly follow orders.

Thanks also to all of you who did enlist, for whatever reason – belief in “the cause,” economic hardship, a desire to protect your country – yet retained your critical thinking skills, and ultimately chose not to re-enlist.

No reasonable person would hold individual troops responsible for the worldwide carnage perpetrated by our government. Obviously, those with their hands on the levers of power ought to be held fully accountable. I would point out, however, that in a democracy, each individual bears some degree, however small, of responsibility for the actions of his country.

So on this 4th of July, I ask all Americans, service members and civilians alike, to honor our democratic traditions by doing a little critical thinking about our various wars and our respective roles in them – even if that role is merely apathy. [Disclosure: I am married to a 24-year veteran of the Air Force, who retired in 1999]. General Butler spent his retirement years critiquing his 33-year career as a Marine and the role of the military in advancing corporate and financial interests (then as now dressed up in the garb of liberation and freedom) through his writing and more than 1200 speeches in 700 cities. Surely we can find a few minutes to follow this patriot’s example.

On this July 4th, I salute Veterans for Peace, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans Against the War, Winter Soldiers, and all other veterans who speak out about these wars. And I am deeply grateful to those who have few employment options, yet still choose not to join the military. Thank-you for not “serving.”

Katherine M. Acosta is a freelance writer in Madison, Wisconsin. She holds a PhD in Sociology and is currently working on a script about life in a “post peak” world. She can be contacted at UndisciplinedPhD@gmail.com.

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This Fourth of July, Let's Stop Worrying What the Founders Would Think

History bears little resemblance to the cartoonish view of the birth of the nation that most people hold.

by Joshua Holland [article link](#)

AlterNet [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:48 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Friday, July 1, 2011

David Ruhlen: Multi-national Corporations, Personified

Multi-national Corporations, Personified

by David Ruhlen [article link](#)

July 1, 2011 | OpEdNews

Terrible catastrophes loom in our future. Water, oil, food, climate -- all are high on the list of pending and probable disasters. Any of these could be the first to emerge to truly devastate our way of life. And when the you-know-what does hit the fan, no matter which is first, these catastrophes may become mutually reinforcing, and we'll experience the mother of all perfect storms.

The obvious thread common to these impending calamities is that they are man-made. In what is just a blink of an eye in evolutionary terms, in only in the last 100 years, we have participated in the accelerated destruction that brings us now to the brink. And yet, incredibly, as we witness these growing trends, as the catastrophes loom larger, we persist in actively feeding and sustaining these calamities of our own making. Yes, we are culpable and, yes, we have enthusiastically partaken; and well, yes, there might be some trouble ahead; but no, we really like our technology and lifestyle. We are comfortably numb to the realities, and besides, there isn't much we can do anyway, is there? It may be cognitive dissonance, or it may be magical thinking, but it's never seemed more true that a body at rest tends to stay at rest.

But if the public is transfixed in the headlights' glare, so too are the policy makers, who are either unable to see, or proudly proclaim their refusal to grasp, the significance of the information made available to them. These are the smartest guys in the room (or so they keep telling us), and yet they continue to ignore or deny the evidence. Their stubborn inaction in the face of these disasters not only represents an absolute failure of public policy and political leadership, but, given the stakes involved, may rise to the level of criminal conspiracy. Of course, by definition a criminal conspiracy requires a co-conspirator, and driving the status quo -- pushing the narrative best captured by the iconic Alfred E Newman's "What, Me Worry?" -- are the multi-national corporations.

It is well known that Big Money's control of the media and messaging allows it to deny these pending calamities, even as corporations drive more profit to the bottom line and stuff more wealth into the pockets of the elite from the very activities that hasten our demise. Their control of the message is so well and widely documented that further proof just seems redundant -- still, it is gratifying that evidence of it so regularly bubbles to the surface.

In fact, just this week we learned that a leading denier of climate change has taken \$1 million from the oil and coal industries over the last decade; among his many services on behalf of the skeptic crowd, Dr. Willie Soon of the Harvard-Smithsonian Centre for Astrophysics has sought to weaken a major assessment of global warming by the UN's leading climate science body. And according to the Guardian, documents obtained by Greenpeace under FoIA show that "the Charles G Koch Foundation, a leading provider of funds for climate sceptic groups, gave Soon two grants totalling \$175,000 in 2005/6, and again in 2010. In addition the American Petroleum Institute (API), which represents the US petroleum and natural gas industries, gave him multiple grants between 2001 and 2007 totalling \$274,000, oil company Exxon Mobil provided \$335,000 between 2005 and 2010, and Soon received other grants from coal and oil industry

sources including the Mobil Foundation, the Texaco Foundation and the Electric Power Research Institute." In his comment on these revelations, Kert Davies, a research director at Greenpeace, is reported to have said: "A campaign of climate change denial has been waged for over 20 years by big oil and big coal. Scientists like Dr. Soon, who take fossil fuel money and pretend to be independent scientists, are pawns."

And so, because it owns the policy and political agenda, Big Money denies our pending calamities through the shells (scientists and politicians, alike) it employs. This is true for water, oil and food as it is for climate change -- as it is for virtually any other you might wish to name. The case of the good Dr. Soon shows again that pay-for-play expertise is readily abundant and will be, sadly, readily sought and employed. These revelations are only mildly discomforting for the multi-nationals (maybe), the disclosures unlikely to alter their behavior, because the cost-benefit is so wildly positive! Corporations have become spectacularly successful in their relentless pursuit of shareholder wealth -- in part -- through their dedicated strategy of co-opting our public officials and experts.

As a result of their success, multi-national corporations are now the world's most dominant economic and political force, and they have become perhaps the greatest threat to mankind in its history. Because they are at the centre of the worst trends and pending catastrophes, and because they actively and aggressively hold the status quo even as they deny them, multi-national corporations are driving a headlong rush to our ultimate demise. And even as they do, multi-national corporations -- personified as they are by our elected officials and the other smart people in the room -- gaze back at us with that goofy expression and say "What, Me Worry?"

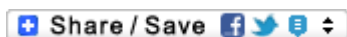
Well yes, we need to worry, but we need to do much more. Faced with imminent mortal danger in your own home, would you just settle in to watch Breaking Bad, or would you rouse yourself to make at least a token effort to save yourself and your family? Well dear reader, our global house is on fire, and we are faced with the same collective imperative to act. Because, if we don't, our failure will not only implicate us in this ongoing criminal conspiracy, but will certainly rise to the level of crimes against humanity.

And then we will become the real personification of the multi-national corporations.

David Ruhlen is a writer, musician and activist living in Canada. He notes with great alarm the profoundly negative trends that will increasingly affect us all. And the trends that have come to so completely reflect the human condition are these: Staggering wealth is amassed by the few, while the permanent and growing underclass becomes increasingly irrelevant to those in power. A state of perpetual war now exists, both at home and abroad, where citizens are increasingly monitored and coerced into obedience and submission by governments seeking ever more control. The health of the planet is increasingly at risk and, with it, our very survival. And representative democracy has long-since ceased to reflect our will, as politicians openly cater to the demands of a tiny elite.

OpEdNews [articles](#) by David Ruhlen

OpEdNews [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:28 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Thursday, June 30, 2011

Sherwood Ross: US Must End Wars Fought to Hike Corporate Profits

US Must End Wars Fought to Hike Corporate Profits

by Sherwood Ross [article link](#)

June 30, 2011 | Global Research

Humanism has little place in U.S. global affairs these days when government acts as the enforcement arm of capitalism-run-amok.

Especially since WWII, Washington has habitually aligned itself with the goals of U.S. corporations to dominate. In Latin America and elsewhere, it has funded armies of goons that harass, batter, jail, and murder labor leaders and their allies. In Colombia, labor organizers that call a strike put their lives at risk. It's a veritable shooting gallery where trade unionists are targets.

In Iraq, writes Noam Chomsky in *"Interventions"* (City Lights Books), the occupying forces broke into union offices, arrested leaders, and enforced Saddam Hussein's antilabor laws. Union leaders were killed under mysterious circumstances. Concessions went to bitterly anti-union U.S. firms. New oil contracts went to firms whose executives were personal friends of President George W. Bush.

At home, U.S. corporations---which exhibit zero loyalty to their employees and to the cities that gave them all those tax breaks to locate---put profits first even if it means stripping those cities of their plants; even if it means throwing thousands of loyal staffers out of work; even if it means cheating taxpayers by relocating their headquarters' offshore; even if it means hiring cheap foreign labor.

"We are seeing the Financial Elite of America waging class warfare against the ordinary working men and women of this country who have made it what it is today," says University of Illinois international legal authority Francis Boyle.

And Noam Chomsky points in *Imperial Ambitions* (Metropolitan Books): "Corporations barely pay taxes. The corporate tax rate is already very low, but corporations have worked out an array of complicated techniques so they often don't have to pay taxes at all."

At the same time, he adds, "the general population has gone through 30 years(1975-2005) of either stagnation or decline in real wages, with people working longer hours with fewer benefits. I don't think there's been a period like this in American history." Meanwhile, corporations harvest record profits.

As sociologist James Petras of Binghamton University points out in his *"Rulers and Ruled in the US Empire,"* (Clarity): "Today, over 50 percent of the top 500 US (multinational corporations) MNCs earn over half their profits from overseas operations...This tendency will accentuate as US MNCs relocate almost all their operations, including manufacturing, design and execution. They will employ low tech and high tech employees in their pursuit for competitive advantages and high rates of profits." (This is not to say that some MNCs aren't building schools, housing, highways, and public facilities near their overseas plants.)

Petras noted that Mexican President Carlos Salinas(1988-94) "privatized over 110 public enterprises, opened the borders to subsidized US agricultural exports---ruining over 1.5-million...farmers and peasants---and signed the North American Free Trade Agreement. His policies facilitated the US takeover of Mexico's retail trade, real estate, agriculture, industry, banking and communications sectors.

Similar patterns of foreign takeovers were evident throughout the region, especially in Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia where lucrative gas, oil and mining firms were privatized and sold to foreign investors."

"Oil and energy companies secured exploration rights via corruption by buying out entire ministries in Russia, Nigeria, Angola, Bolivia and Venezuela in the 1990s," Petras writes. "Securing a toehold in any economic sector of China to exploit

cheap labor requires the MNC to pay off a small army of government officials. This is more than compensated by the regime's enforcement of a cheap labor regime, repression of labor discontent and the imposition of state-controlled pro-business 'labor unions.'"

Everywhere one looks, Imperial America is training police departments of friendly dictators in brutal suppression techniques if and when the peasantry demands a bigger share of the pie which they baked. Journalist William Blum in "*Rogue State*" (Common Courage Press), U.S. armed forces "are being deployed in well over 100 countries in every part of the world," countries Washington supplies "with sizable amounts of highly lethal military equipment, and training their armed forces and police in the brutal arts..."

It's no coincidence that as arms become America's No. 1 export, civilian jobs are going down the tubes. Columbia University economist Seymour Melman, interviewed in the Feb., 1992, issue of *The Progressive*, argued because of its vast expenditures for war the U.S. was "losing millions of productive jobs" in the civilian sector to foreign firms.

"The U.S. economy is in dramatic disrepair compared to Germany and Japan. By concentrating capital on civilian purposes for 45 years they've emerged as the true victors of the Cold War," Melman said.

More recently, Chomsky wrote: "U.S. military expenditures approximate those of the rest of the world combined, while arms sales by 38 North American companies (one in Canada) account for over 60 percent of the world total."

The record of history shows the White House has used CIA and Pentagon muscle to attack nations whose officials wouldn't play ball in the capitalist league. President Eisenhower gave the green light for the 1953 CIA overthrow of Iran. President Kennedy attempted to overthrow Cuba, but failed, in 1961; President Nixon succeeded in overthrowing the legally elected president of Chile in 1973; and President Reagan funded the Contras to wage war against the leftist Sandinistas of Nicaragua.

"Because of Red Scare anxieties," wrote James Carroll in "*House of War*" (Houghton Mifflin), "Americans would uncritically accept the maturing of an economic system (capitalism) that, in its effect if not its structure, condemned most of the world to crushing impoverishment. The humane aspects of Marx's critique of capitalism would not be reckoned with in the United States, with dangerous consequences that define the ever more polarized twenty-first century."

When Cold War presidents gazed upon the world, all they saw was Red. War hero Jimmy Doolittle, who led the first U.S. air strike against Japan in 1942, later as chairman of a special task force reported to President Dwight Eisenhower that the U.S. "must learn to subvert, sabotage, and destroy our enemies by more clever, more sophisticated, and more effective methods than those used against us.

It may be necessary that the American people be made acquainted with, understand, and support this fundamentally repugnant philosophy." That, of course, is precisely what happened. The end began to justify any means. The Pentagon even uses its listening devices to steal business information to give U.S. firms an edge over foreign ones.

Fear-mongering American politicians claimed that if just one country went Communist, all its neighbors would topple like dominoes. For decades, the U.S. subsidized anti-Communist Japanese politicians; the CIA secretly lined the pockets of mullahs and ayatollahs in Iran; and the Pentagon plunged recklessly into civil wars such as in Viet Nam using overwhelming force and violence. Ironically, at home the Justice Department, responding to the "Red Scare," persecuted, tried, and jailed leaders of the U.S. Communist Party, for allegedly *advocating* the same strategies the Pentagon was actually *employing* on a massive scale the world over.

Yet all the Pentagon's costly armaments designed to topple Red regimes proved less effective than the protests of the non-violent disciples of Gandhi, such as Solidarity labor union's Lech Walesa in Poland, who led the break out of the Soviet orbit. In Russia, President Mikhail Gorbachev, the advocate of Glasnost, or openness, could see that Soviet-brand Communism was failing his people and began to make changes that permitted private ownership of business.

Similarly, strong-arm capitalism American-style today needs to be transformed. Starting wars to force other nations to privatize natural resources they would prefer to keep under public control is both reprehensible and criminal.

In his treatise "*On Human Work*" in 1981, Pope John Paul II called for "the primacy of the person over things and of human labour over capital as a whole." Workers must be paid fairly, allowed to form unions and strike for self-improvement and treated with dignity and respect. Let it be.

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Sherwood Ross is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Wednesday, June 29, 2011

[Daniel Trotta: US Cost of War at Least \\$3.7 Trillion and Counting](#)

US Cost of War at Least \$3.7 Trillion and Counting

by Daniel Trotta [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 29, 2011 | CommonDreams | Reuters

When President Barack Obama cited cost as a reason to bring troops home from [Afghanistan](#), he referred to a \$1 trillion price tag for America's wars.

Staggering as it is, that figure grossly underestimates the total cost of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and [Pakistan](#) to the U.S. Treasury and ignores more imposing costs yet to come, according to a study released on Wednesday.

The final bill will run at least \$3.7 trillion and could reach as high as \$4.4 trillion, according to the research project "[Costs of War](#)" by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies.

In the 10 years since U.S. troops went into Afghanistan to root out the al Qaeda leaders behind the September 11, 2001, attacks, spending on the conflicts totaled \$2.3 trillion to \$2.7 trillion.

Those numbers will continue to soar when considering often overlooked costs such as long-term obligations to wounded veterans and projected war spending from 2012 through 2020. The estimates do not include at least \$1 trillion more in interest payments coming due and many billions more in expenses that cannot be counted, according to the study.

In human terms, 224,000 to 258,000 people have died directly from warfare, including 125,000 civilians in Iraq. Many more have died indirectly, from the loss of clean drinking water, healthcare, and nutrition. An additional 365,000 have been wounded and 7.8 million people -- equal to the combined population of Connecticut and Kentucky -- have been displaced.

"Costs of War" brought together more than 20 academics to uncover the expense of war in lives and dollars, a daunting task given the inconsistent recording of lives lost and what the report called opaque and sloppy accounting by the U.S. Congress and the Pentagon.

The report underlines the extent to which war will continue to stretch the U.S. federal budget, which is already on an unsustainable course due to an aging American population and skyrocketing healthcare costs.

It also raises the question of what the United States gained from its multitrillion-dollar investment.

"I hope that when we look back, whenever this ends, something very good has come out of it," Senator Bob Corker, a Republican from Tennessee, told Reuters in Washington.

SEPT 11, 2001: THE DAMAGE CONTINUES

In one sense, the report measures the cost of 9/11, the American shorthand for the events of September 11, 2001. Nineteen hijackers plus other al Qaeda plotters spent an estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 on the plane attacks that killed 2,995 people and caused \$50 billion to \$100 billion in economic damages.

What followed were three wars in which \$50 billion amounts to a rounding error. For every person killed on September 11, another 73 have been killed since.

Was it worth it? That is a question many people want answered, said Catherine Lutz, head of the anthropology department at Brown and co-director of the study.

"We decided we needed to do this kind of rigorous assessment of what it cost to make those choices to go to war," she said. "Politicians, we assumed, were not going to do that kind of assessment."

The report arrives as Congress debates how to cut a U.S. deficit projected at \$1.4 trillion this year, roughly a 10th of which can be attributed to direct war spending.

What did the United States gain for its trillions?

Strategically, the results for the United States are mixed. Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein are dead, but Iraq and Afghanistan are far from stable democracies. Iran has gained influence in the Gulf and the Taliban, though ousted from government, remain a viable military force in Afghanistan.

"The United States has been extremely successful in protecting the homeland," said George Friedman, founder of STRATFOR, a U.S.-based intelligence company.

"Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was capable of mounting very sophisticated, complex, operations on an intercontinental basis. That organization with that capability has not only been substantially reduced, it seems to have been shattered," Friedman said.

Economically, the results are also mixed. War spending may be adding half a percentage point a year to growth in the gross domestic product but that has been more than offset by the negative effects of deficit spending, the report concludes.

COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

Some U.S. government reports have attempted to assess the costs of war, notably a March 2011 Congressional Research Service report that estimated post-September 11 war funding at \$1.4 trillion through 2012. The Congressional Budget Office projected war costs through 2021 at \$1.8 trillion.

A ground-breaking private estimate was published in the 2008 book "The Three Trillion Dollar War," by Linda Bilmes, a member of the Watson Institute team, and Nobel-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz. That work revealed how much cost was added by interest on deficit spending and medical care for veterans.

The report draws on those sources and pieces together many others for a more comprehensive picture.

The report also makes special note of Pakistan, a front not generally mentioned along with Iraq and Afghanistan. War has probably killed more people in Pakistan than in neighboring Afghanistan, the report concludes.

Politicians throughout history have underestimated the costs of war, believing they will be shorter and less deadly than reality, said Neta Crawford, the other co-director of the report and a political science professor at Boston University.

The report said former President George W. Bush's administration was "shamelessly politically driven" in underestimating Iraq war costs before the 2003 invasion.

Most official sources continue to overlook costs, largely because of a focus on just Pentagon spending, Crawford said.

"Over the last decade, we have spent a trillion dollars on war," Obama said in last week's speech on reducing U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan. At the very least, he was rounding down by \$200 billion to \$300 billion, when counting U.S. congressional appropriations for the post 9/11 wars.

"I don't know what the president knows, but I wish it were a trillion," Crawford said. "It would be better if it were a trillion."

ELUSIVE NUMBER

In theory, adding up the dollars spent and lives lost should be a statistical errand. The U.S. Congress appropriates the money, and a life lost on battlefield should have a death certificate and a casket to match.

The team quickly discovered, however, the task was far more complicated.

Specific war spending over the past 10 years, when expressed in 2011 dollars, comes to \$1.3 trillion, the "Costs of War" project found. When it comes to accounting for every dollar, that \$1.3 trillion is merely a good start.

Since the wars have been financed by deficit spending, interest must be paid -- \$185 billion of accumulated so far.

The Pentagon has received an additional \$326 billion to \$652 billion beyond what can be attributed to the war appropriations, the study found.

Homeland security spending has totaled another \$401 billion so far that can be traced to September 11. War-related foreign aid: another \$74 billion.

Then comes caring for U.S. veterans of war. Nearly half of the 1.25 million who have served in uniform in Iraq and Afghanistan have used their status as veterans to make health or disability claims at an expense of \$32.6 billion to date.

Those costs will soar over the next 40 years as veterans age. The report estimates the U.S. obligations to the veterans will reach \$589 billion to \$934 billion through 2050.

So far, those numbers add up to a low estimate of \$2.9 trillion and a moderate estimate of \$3.6 trillion in costs to the U.S. Treasury. No high estimate was offered.

"We feel a conservative measure of costs is plenty large to attract attention," said report contributor Ryan Edwards, an economist who studied the war impact on deficit spending.

Those numbers leave out hundreds of billions in social costs not born by the U.S. taxpayer but by veterans and their families: another \$295 billion to \$400 billion, increasing the range of costs to date to some \$3.2 trillion to \$4 trillion.

That's a running total through fiscal 2011. Add another \$453 billion in war-related spending projected for 2012 to 2020 and the total grows to \$3.668 trillion to \$4.444 trillion.

THE HUMAN TOLL

If the financial costs are elusive, so too is the human toll.

The report estimates between 224,475 and 257,655 have been killed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, though those numbers give a false sense of precision. There are many sources of data on civilian deaths, most with different results.

The civilian death toll in Iraq -- 125,000 -- and the number of Saddam's security forces killed in invasion -- 10,000 -- are loose estimates. The U.S. military does not publish a thorough accounting.

"We don't do body counts," Tommy Franks, the U.S. commander in Iraq, famously said after the fall of Saddam in 2003.

In Afghanistan, the civilian death count ranges from 11,700 to 13,900. For Pakistan, where there is little access to the battlefield and the United States fights mostly through aerial drone attacks, the study found it impossible to distinguish between civilian and insurgent deaths.

The numbers only consider direct deaths -- people killed by bombs or bullets. Estimates for indirect deaths in war vary so much that researchers considered them too arbitrary to report.

"When the fighting stops, the indirect dying continues. It's in fact worse than land mines. The healthcare system is still in bad shape. People are still suffering the effects of malnutrition and so on," Crawford said.

Even where the United States does do body counts -- for the members of the military -- the numbers may come up short of reality, said Lutz, the study's co-director. When veterans return home, they are more likely to die in suicides and automobile accidents.

"The rate of chaotic behavior," she said, "is high."

(Additional reporting by Susan Cornwell, Missy Ryan, Brett Gering, Laura MacInnis and Sharon Reich; Editing by Doina Chiacu)

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The Business of America Is War

by Stephen Lendman [article link](#)

June 29, 2011 | OpEdNews

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Prophets of War

interview with William Hartung [program link](#) (mp3)

January 13, 2011 | Mind Over Matters

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Interview with William Hartung Director of the Arms & Security Initiative at the [New America Foundation](#) and author of "[Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex](#)"

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Robert Parry: How Greed Destroys America

Exclusive: New studies show that America's corporate chieftains are living like kings while the middle class stagnates and shrivels. Yet, the Tea Party and other anti-tax forces remain determined to protect the historically low tax rates of the rich and push the burden of reducing the federal debt onto the rest of society, a curious approach explored by Robert Parry.

How Greed Destroys America

by Robert Parry [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 28, 2011 | CommonDreams | Consortiumnews

If the “free-market” theories of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman were correct, the United States of the last three decades should have experienced a golden age in which the lavish rewards flowing to the titans of industry would have transformed the society into a vibrant force for beneficial progress.

After all, it has been faith in “free-market economics” as a kind of secular religion that has driven U.S. government policies – from the emergence of Ronald Reagan through the neo-liberalism of Bill Clinton into the brave new world of House Republican budget chairman Paul Ryan.

By slashing income tax rates to historically low levels – and only slightly boosting them under President Clinton before dropping them again under George W. Bush – the U.S. government essentially incentivized greed or what Ayn Rand liked to call “the virtue of selfishness.”

Further, by encouraging global “free trade” and removing regulations like the New Deal’s Glass-Steagall separation of commercial and investment banks, the government also got out of the way of “progress,” even if that “progress” has had crushing results for many middle-class Americans.

True, not all the extreme concepts of author/philosopher Ayn Rand and economist Milton Friedman have been implemented – there are still programs like Social Security and Medicare to get rid of – but their “magic of the market” should be glowing by now.

We should be able to assess whether laissez-faire capitalism is superior to the mixed public-private economy that dominated much of the 20th Century.

The old notion was that a relatively affluent middle class would contribute to the creation of profitable businesses because average people could afford to buy consumer goods, own their own homes and take an annual vacation with the kids. That “middle-class system,” however, required intervention by the government as the representative of the everyman.

Beyond building a strong infrastructure for growth – highways, airports, schools, research programs, a safe banking system, a common defense, etc. – the government imposed a progressive tax structure that helped pay for these priorities and also discouraged the accumulation of massive wealth.

After all, the threat to a healthy democracy from concentrated wealth had been known to American leaders for generations.

A century ago, it was Republican President Theodore Roosevelt who advocated for a progressive income tax and an estate tax. In the 1930s, it was Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, who dealt with the economic and societal carnage that under-regulated financial markets inflicted on the nation during the Great Depression.

With those hard lessons learned, the federal government acted on behalf of the common citizen to limit Wall Street’s freewheeling ways and to impose high tax rates on excessive wealth.

So, during Dwight Eisenhower’s presidency of the 1950s, the marginal tax rate on the top tranche of earnings for the richest Americans was about 90 percent. When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the top rate was still around 70 percent.

Discouraging Greed

Greed was not simply frowned upon; it was discouraged.

Put differently, government policy was to maintain some degree of egalitarianism within the U.S. political-economic system. And to a remarkable degree, the strategy worked.

The American middle class became the envy of the world, with otherwise average folk earning enough money to support their families comfortably and enjoy some pleasures of life that historically had been reserved only for the rich.

Without doubt, there were serious flaws in the U.S. system, especially due to the legacies of racism and sexism. And it was when the federal government responded to powerful social movements that demanded those injustices be addressed in the 1960s and 1970s, that an opening was created for right-wing politicians to exploit resentments among white men, particularly in the South.

By posing as populists hostile to “government social engineering,” the Right succeeded in duping large numbers of middle-class Americans into seeing their own interests – and their “freedom” – as in line with corporate titans who also decried federal regulations, including those meant to protect average citizens, like requiring seat belts in cars and discouraging cigarette smoking.

Amid the sluggish economy of the 1970s, the door swung open wider for the transformation of American society that had been favored by the likes of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, putting the supermen of industry over the everyman of democracy.

Friedman tested out his “free-market” theories in the socio-economic laboratories of brutal military dictatorships in Latin America, most famously collaborating with Chile’s Gen. Augusto Pinochet who crushed political opponents with torture and assassinations.

Ayn Rand became the darling of the American Right with her books, such as *Atlas Shrugged*, promoting the elitist notion that brilliant individuals represented the engine of society and that government efforts to lessen social inequality or help the average citizen were unjust and unwise.

The Pied Piper

Yet, while Rand and Friedman gave some intellectual heft to “free-market” theories, Ronald Reagan proved to be the perfect pied piper for guiding millions of working Americans in a happy dance toward their own serfdom.

In his first inaugural address, Reagan declared that “government is the problem” – and many middle-class whites cheered.

However, what Reagan’s policies meant in practice was a sustained assault on the middle class: the busting of unions, the export of millions of decent-paying jobs, and the transfer of enormous wealth to the already rich. The tax rates for the wealthiest were slashed about in half. Greed was incentivized.

Ironically, the Reagan era came just as technology – much of it created by government-funded research – was on the cusp of creating extraordinary wealth that could have been shared with average Americans. Those benefits instead accrued to the top one or two percent.

The rich also benefited from the off-shoring of jobs, exploiting cheap foreign labor and maximizing profits. The only viable way for the super-profits of “free trade” to be shared with the broader U.S. population was through taxes on the rich. However, Reagan and his anti-government true-believers made sure that those taxes were kept at historically low levels.

The Ayn Rand/Milton Friedman theories may have purported to believe that the “free market” would somehow generate benefits for the society as a whole, but their ideas really represented a moralistic frame which held that it was somehow

right that the wealth of the society should go to its “most productive” members and that the rest of us were essentially “parasites.”

Apparently, special people like Rand also didn’t need to be encumbered by philosophical consistency. Though a fierce opponent of the welfare state, Rand secretly accepted the benefits of Medicare after she was diagnosed with lung cancer, according to one of her assistants.

She connived to have Evva Pryor, an employee of Rand’s law firm, arrange Social Security and Medicare benefits for Ann O’Connor, Ayn Rand using an altered spelling of her first name and her husband’s last name.

In *100 Voices: An Oral History of Ayn Rand*, Scott McConnell, founder of the Ayn Rand Institute’s media department, quoted Pryor as justifying Rand’s move by saying: “Doctors cost a lot more money than books earn and she could be totally wiped out.” Yet, it didn’t seem to matter much if “average” Americans were wiped out.

Essentially, the Right was promoting the Social Darwinism of the 19th Century, albeit in chic new clothes. The Gilded Age from a century ago was being recreated behind Reagan’s crooked smile, Clinton’s good-ole-boy charm and George W. Bush’s Texas twang.

Whenever the political descendants of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt tried to steer the nation back toward programs that would benefit the middle class and demand greater sacrifice from the super-rich, the wheel was grabbed again by politicians and pundits shouting the epithet, “tax-and-spend.”

Many average Americans were pacified by reminders of how Reagan made them feel good with his rhetoric about “the shining city on the hill.”

The Rand/Friedman elitism also remains alive with today’s arguments from Republicans who protest the idea of raising taxes on businessmen and entrepreneurs because they are the ones who “create the jobs,” even if there is little evidence that they are actually creating American jobs.

Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, who is leading the fight to replace Medicare with a voucher system that envisions senior citizens buying health insurance from profit-making companies, cites Ayn Rand as his political inspiration.

A Land for Billionaires

The consequences of several decades of Reaganism and its related ideas are now apparent. Wealth has been concentrated at the top with billionaires living extravagant lives that not even monarchs could have envisioned, while the middle class shrinks and struggles, with one everyman after another being shoved down into the lower classes and into poverty.

Millions of Americans forego needed medical care because they can’t afford health insurance; millions of young people, burdened by college loans, crowd back in with their parents; millions of trained workers settle for low-paying jobs; millions of families skip vacations and other simple pleasures of life.

Beyond the unfairness, there is the macro-economic problem which comes from massive income disparity. A healthy economy is one where the vast majority people can buy products, which can then be manufactured more cheaply, creating a positive cycle of profits and prosperity.

With Americans unable to afford the new car or the new refrigerator, American corporations see their domestic profit margins squeezed. So they are compensating for the struggling U.S. economy by expanding their businesses abroad in developing markets, but they also keep their profits there.

There are now economic studies that confirm what Americans have been sensing in their own lives, though the mainstream U.S. news media tends to attribute these trends to cultural changes, rather than political choices.

For instance, the Washington Post published a lengthy front-page article on June 19, describing the findings of researchers who gained access to economic data from the Internal Revenue Service which revealed which categories of taxpayers were making the high incomes.

To the surprise of some observers, the big bucks were not flowing primarily to athletes or actors or even stock market speculators. America's new super-rich were mostly corporate chieftains.

As the Post's Peter Whoriskey framed the story, U.S. business underwent a cultural transformation from the 1970s when chief executives believed more in sharing the wealth than they do today.

The article cites a U.S. dairy company CEO from the 1970s, Kenneth J. Douglas, who earned the equivalent of about \$1 million a year. He lived comfortably but not ostentatiously. Douglas had an office on the second floor of a milk distribution center, and he turned down raises because he felt it would hurt morale at the plant, Whoriskey reported.

However, just a few decades later, Gregg L. Engles, the current CEO of the same company, Dean Foods, averages about 10 times what Douglas made. Engles works in a glittering high-rise office building in Dallas; owns a vacation estate in Vail, Colorado; belongs to four golf clubs; and travels in a \$10 million corporate jet. He apparently has little concern about what his workers think.

"The evolution of executive grandeur – from very comfortable to jet-setting – reflects one of the primary reasons that the gap between those with the highest incomes and everyone else is widening," Whoriskey reported.

"For years, statistics have depicted growing income disparity in the United States, and it has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. In 2008, the last year for which data are available, for example, the top 0.1 percent of earners took in more than 10 percent of the personal income in the United States, including capital gains, and the top 1 percent took in more than 20 percent.

"But economists had little idea who these people were. How many were Wall Street financiers? Sports stars? Entrepreneurs? Economists could only speculate, and debates over what is fair stalled. Now a mounting body of economic research indicates that the rise in pay for company executives is a critical feature in the widening income gap."

Jet-Setting Execs

The Post article continued: "The largest single chunk of the highest-income earners, it turns out, are executives and other managers in firms, according to a landmark analysis of tax returns by economists Jon Bakija, Adam Cole and Bradley T. Heim. These are not just executives from Wall Street, either, but from companies in even relatively mundane fields such as the milk business.

"The top 0.1 percent of earners make about \$1.7 million or more, including capital gains. Of those, 41 percent were executives, managers and supervisors at non-financial companies, according to the analysis, with nearly half of them deriving most of their income from their ownership in privately-held firms.

"An additional 18 percent were managers at financial firms or financial professionals at any sort of firm. In all, nearly 60 percent fell into one of those two categories. Other recent research, moreover, indicates that executive compensation at the nation's largest firms has roughly quadrupled in real terms since the 1970s, even as pay for 90 percent of America has stalled."

While these new statistics are striking – suggesting a broader problem with high-level greed than might have been believed – the Post ducked any political analysis that would have laid blame on Ronald Reagan and various right-wing economic theories.

In a follow-up [editorial](#) on June 26, the Post lamented the nation's growing income inequality but shied away from proposing higher marginal tax rates on the rich or faulting the past several decades of low tax rates. Instead, the Post suggested perhaps going after deductions on employer-provided health insurance and mortgage interest, tax breaks that also help middle-class families.

It appears that in Official Washington and inside the major U.S. news media the idea of learning from past presidents, including the Roosevelts and Dwight Eisenhower, is a non-starter. Instead there's an unapologetic embrace of the theories of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, an affection that can pop out at unusual moments.

Addressing a CNBC "Fast Money" panel last year, movie director Oliver Stone was taken aback when one CNBC talking head gushed how Stone's "Wall Street" character Gordon Gecko had been an inspiration, known for his famous comment, "Greed is good." A perplexed Stone responded that Gecko, who made money by breaking up companies and eliminating jobs, was meant to be a villain.

However, the smug attitude of the CNBC stock picker represented a typical tribute to Ronald Reagan's legacy. After all, greed did not simply evolve from some vague shift in societal attitudes, as the Post suggests. Rather, it was stimulated – and rewarded – by Reagan's tax policies.

Reagan's continued popularity also makes it easier for today's "no-tax-increase" crowd to demand only spending cuts as a route to reducing the federal debt, an ocean of red ink largely created by the tax cuts of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.

Tea Partiers, in demanding even more cuts in government help for average citizens and even more tax cuts for the rich, represent only the most deluded part of middle-class America. A recent poll of Americans rated Reagan the greatest U.S. president ever, further enshrining his anti-government message in the minds of many Americans, even those in the battered middle class.

When a majority of Americans voted for Republicans in Election 2010 – and with early polls pointing toward a likely GOP victory in the presidential race of 2012 – it's obvious that large swaths of the population have no sense of what's in store for them as they position their own necks under the boots of corporate masters.

The only answer to this American crisis would seem to be a reenergized and democratized federal government fighting for average citizens and against the greedy elites. But – after several decades of Reaganism, with the "free market" religion the new gospel of the political/media classes – that seems a difficult outcome to achieve.

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Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, [Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush](#), was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat. His two previous books are [Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq](#) and [Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'](#).

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Tuesday, June 28, 2011

Michael Parenti: Making the World Safe for Hypocrisy

Making the World Safe for Hypocrisy

(From the book "Dirty Truths" (1996))

by Michael Parenti [article link](#)

June 28, 2011 | Information Clearing House

Why has the United States government supported counterinsurgency in Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, and many other places around the world, at such a loss of human life to the populations of those nations? Why did it invade tiny Grenada and then Panama? Why did it support mercenary wars against progressive governments in Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Indonesia, East Timor, Western Sahara, South Yemen, and elsewhere?

Is it because our leaders want to save democracy? Are they concerned about the well-being of these defenseless peoples? Is our national security threatened? I shall try to show that the arguments given to justify U.S. policies are false ones.

But this does not mean the policies themselves are senseless. American intervention may seem "wrongheaded" but, in fact, it is fairly consistent and horribly successful.

The history of the United States has been one of territorial and economic expansionism, with the benefits going mostly to the U.S. business class in the form of growing investments and markets, access to rich natural resources and cheap labor, and the accumulation of enormous profits.

The American people have had to pay the costs of empire, supporting a huge military establishment with their taxes, while suffering the loss of jobs, the neglect of domestic services, and the loss of tens of thousands of American lives in overseas military ventures.

The greatest costs, of course, have been borne by the peoples of the Third World who have endured poverty, pillage, disease, dispossession, exploitation, illiteracy, and the widespread destruction of their lands, cultures, and lives.

As a relative latecomer to the practice of colonialism, the United States could not match the older European powers in the acquisition of overseas territories. But the United States was the earliest and most consummate practitioner of neoimperialism or neocolonialism, the process of dominating the politico-economic life of a nation without benefit of direct possession.

Almost half a century before the British thought to give a colonized land its nominal independence, as in India-while continuing to exploit its labor and resources, and dominate its markets and trade-the United States had perfected this practice in Cuba and elsewhere.

In places like the Philippines, Haiti, and Nicaragua, and when dealing with Native American nations, U.S. imperialism proved itself as brutal as the French in Indochina, the Belgians in the Congo, the Spaniards in South America, the Portuguese in Angola, the Italians in Libya, the Germans in Southwest Africa, and the British almost everywhere else. Not long ago, U.S. military forces delivered a destruction upon Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia that surpassed anything perpetuated by the older colonizers. And today, the U.S. counterinsurgency apparatus and surrogate security forces in Latin America and elsewhere sustain a system of political assassination, torture, and repression unequalled in technological sophistication and ruthlessness.

All this is common knowledge to progressive critics of U.S. policy, but most Americans would be astonished to hear of it. They have been taught that, unlike other nations, their country has escaped the sins of empire and has been a champion of peace and justice among nations. This enormous gap between what the United States does in the world and what Americans think their nation is doing is one of the great propaganda accomplishments of the dominant political mythology.

It should be noted, though, that despite the endless propaganda barrage emanating from official sources and the corporate-owned major media, large sectors of the public have throughout U.S. history displayed an anti-interventionist sentiment, an unwillingness to commit U.S. troops to overseas actions-a sentiment facetiously labeled "isolationism" by the interventionists.

The Rational Function of Policy Myths

Within U.S. ruling circles there are differences of opinion regarding interventionist policy. There are conservatives who complain that U.S. policy is plagued by weakness and lacks toughness and guts and all the other John Wayne virtues. And there are liberals who say U.S. policy is foolish and relies too heavily on military solutions and should be more flexible and co-optive when protecting and advancing the interests of the United States (with such interests usually left unspecified).

A closer look reveals that U.S. foreign policy is neither weak nor foolish, but on the contrary is rational and remarkably successful in reproducing the conditions for the continued international expropriation of wealth, and that while it has suffered occasional setbacks, the people who run the foreign policy establishment in Washington know what they are doing and why they are doing it.

If the mythology they offer as justification for their policies seems irrational, this does not mean that the policies themselves are irrational from the standpoint of the class interests of those who pursue such policies. This is true of domestic myths and policies as well as those pertaining to foreign policy.

Once we grasp this, we can see how notions and arrangements that are harmful, wasteful, indeed, destructive of human and social values-and irrational from a human and social viewpoint-are not irrational for global finance capital because the latter has no dedication to human and social values. Capitalism has no loyalty to anything but itself, to the accumulation of wealth. Once we understand that, we can see the cruel rationality of the seemingly irrational myths that Washington policy makers peddle. Some times what we see as irrational is really the discrepancy between what the myth wants us to believe and what is true.

But again this does not mean the interests served are stupid or irrational, as the liberals like to complain. There is a difference between confusion and deception, a difference between stupidity and subterfuge. Once we understand the underlying class interests of the ruling circles, we will be less mystified by their myths.

A myth is not an idle tale or a fanciful story but a powerful cultural force used to legitimate existing social relations. The interventionist mythology does just that, by emphasizing a community of interests between interventionists in Washington and the American people when in fact there is none, and by blurring over the question of who pays and who profits from U.S. global interventionism.

The mythology has been with us for so long and much of it sufficiently internalized by the public as to be considered part of the political culture. The interventionist mythology, like all other cultural beliefs, does not just float about in space. It must be mediated through a social structure. The national media play a crucial role in making sure that no fundamentally critical views of the rationales underlying and justifying U.S. policy gain national exposure. A similar role is played by the various institutes and policy centers linked to academia and, of course, by political leaders themselves.

Saving Democracy with Tyranny

Our leaders would have us believe we intervened in Nicaragua, for instance, because the Sandinista government was opposed to democracy. The U.S.-supported invasion by right-wing Nicaraguan mercenaries was an "effort to bring them to elections." Putting aside the fact that the Sandinistas had already conducted fair and open elections in 1984, we might wonder why U.S. leaders voiced no such urgent demand for free elections and Western-style parliamentarism during the fifty years that the Somoza dictatorship-installed and supported by the United States-plundered and brutalized the Nicaraguan nation.

Nor today does Washington show any great concern for democracy in any of the U.S.-backed dictatorships around the world (unless one believes that the electoral charade in a country like El Salvador qualifies as "democracy").

If anything, successive U.S. administrations have worked hard to subvert constitutional and popularly accepted governments that pursued policies of social reform favorable to the downtrodden and working poor. Thus the U.S. national security state was instrumental in the overthrow of popular reformist leaders such as Arbenz in Guatemala, Jagan in Guyana, Mossadegh in Iran, Bosch in the Dominican Republic, Sukarno in Indonesia, Goulart in Brazil, and Allende in Chile.

And let us not forget how the United States assisted the militarists in overthrowing democratic governments in Greece, Uruguay, Bolivia, Pakistan, Thailand, and Turkey. Given this record, it is hard to believe that the CIA trained, armed, and financed an expeditionary force of Somocista thugs and mercenaries out of a newly acquired concern for Western-style electoral politics in Nicaragua.

In defense of the undemocratic way U.S. leaders go about "saving democracy," our policy makers offer this kind of sophistry: "We cannot always pick and choose our allies. Sometimes we must support unsavory right-wing authoritarian regimes in order to prevent the spread of far more repressive totalitarian communist ones."

But surely, the degree of repression cannot be the criterion guiding White House policy, for the United States has supported some of the worst butchers in the world: Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua, the Shah in Iran, Salazar in Portugal, Marcos in the Philippines, Pinochet in Chile, Zia in Pakistan, Evren in Turkey, and even Pol Pot in Cambodia.

In the 1965 Indonesian coup, the military slaughtered 500,000 people, according to the Indonesian chief of security (New York Times, 12/21/77; some estimates run twice as high), but this did not deter U.S. leaders from assisting in that takeover or from maintaining cozy relations with the same Jakarta regime that subsequently perpetuated a campaign of repression and mass extermination in East Timor.

U.S. leaders and the business-owned mainstream press describe "Marxist rebels" in countries like El Salvador as motivated by a lust for conquest. Our leaders would have us believe that revolutionaries do not seek power in order to eliminate hunger; they simply hunger for power. But even if this were true, why would that be cause for opposing them?

Washington policy makers have never been bothered by the power appetites of the "moderate" right-wing authoritarian executionists, torturers, and militarists.

In any case, it is not true that leftist governments are more repressive than fascist ones. The political repression under the Sandinistas in Nicaragua was far less than what went on under Somoza. The political repression in Castro's Cuba is mild compared to the butchery perpetrated by the free-market Batista regime. And the revolutionary government in Angola treats its people much more gently than did the Portuguese colonizers.

Furthermore, in a number of countries successful social revolutionary movements have brought a net increase in individual freedom and well-being by advancing the conditions for health and human life, by providing jobs and education for the unemployed and illiterate, by using economic resources for social development rather than for corporate profit, and by overthrowing brutal reactionary regimes, ending foreign exploitation, and involving large sectors of the populace in the task of rebuilding their countries. Revolutions can extend a number of real freedoms without destroying those freedoms that never existed under prior reactionary regimes.

Who Threatens Whom?

Our policy makers also argue that right-wing governments, for all their deficiencies, are friendly toward the United States, while communist ones are belligerent and therefore a threat to U.S. security. But, in truth, every Marxist or left-leaning country, from a great power like the Soviet Union to a small power like Vietnam or Nicaragua to a minipower like Grenada under the New Jewel Movement, sought friendly diplomatic and economic relations with the United States.

These governments did so not necessarily out of love and affection for the United States, but because of something firmer—their own self-interest. As they themselves admitted, their economic development and political security would have been much better served if they could have enjoyed good relations with Washington.

If U.S. leaders justify their hostility toward leftist governments on the grounds that such nations are hostile toward us, what becomes the justification when these countries try to be friendly? When a newly established revolutionary or otherwise dissident regime threatens U.S. hegemonic globalists with friendly relations, this does pose a problem.

The solution is to (1) launch a well-orchestrated campaign of disinformation that heaps criticism on the new government for imprisoning the butchers, assassins, and torturers of the old regime and for failing to institute Western electoral party politics; (2) denounce the new government as a threat to our peace and security; (3) harass and destabilize it and impose economic sanctions; and (4) attack it with counterrevolutionary surrogate forces or, if necessary, U.S. troops. Long before the invasion, the targeted country responds with angry denunciations of U.S. policy.

It moves closer to other "outlawed" nations and attempts to build up its military defenses in anticipation of a U.S.-sponsored attack. These moves are eagerly seized upon by U.S. officials and media as evidence of the other country's antagonism toward the United States, and as justification for the policies that evoked such responses.

Yet it is difficult to demonstrate that small countries like Grenada and Nicaragua are a threat to U.S. security. We remember the cry of the hawk during the Vietnam war: "If we don't fight the Vietcong in the jungles of Indochina, we will have to fight them on the beaches of California."

The image of the Vietnamese getting into their PT boats and crossing the Pacific to invade California was, as Walter Lippmann noted at the time, a grievous insult to the U.S. Navy. The image of a tiny ill-equipped Nicaraguan army driving up through Mexico and across the Rio Grande in order to lay waste to our land is equally ludicrous.

The truth is, the Vietnamese, Cubans, Grenadians, and Nicaraguans have never invaded the United States; it is the United States that has invaded Vietnam, Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua, and it is our government that continues to try to isolate, destabilize, and in other ways threaten any country that tries to drop out of the global capitalist system or even assert an economic nationalism within it.

Remember the Red Menace

For many decades of cold war, when all other arguments failed, there was always the Russian bear. According to our cold warriors, small leftist countries and insurgencies threatened our security because they were extensions of Soviet power. Behind the little Reds there supposedly stood the Giant Red Menace.

Evidence to support this global menace thesis was sometimes farfetched. President Carter and National Security Advisor Brezinski suddenly discovered a "Soviet combat brigade" in Cuba in 1979- which turned out to be a noncombat unit that had been there since 1962. This did not stop President Reagan from announcing to a joint session of Congress several years later: "Cuba is host to a Soviet combat brigade...."

In 1983, in a nationally televised speech, Reagan pointed to satellite photos that revealed the menace of three Soviet helicopters in Nicaragua. Sandinista officials subsequently noted that the helicopters could be seen by anyone arriving at Managua airport and, in any case, posed no military threat to the United States. Equally ingenious was the way Reagan transformed a Grenadian airport, built to accommodate direct tourist flights, into a killer-attack Soviet forward base, and a twenty-foot-deep Grenadian inlet into a potential Soviet submarine base.

In 1967 Secretary of State Dean Rusk argued that U.S. national security was at stake in Vietnam because the Vietnamese were puppets of "Red China" and if China won in Vietnam, it would overrun all of Asia and this supposedly would be the beginning of the end for all of us. Later we were told that the Salvadoran rebels were puppets of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua who were puppets of the Cubans who were puppets of the Russians.

In truth, there was no evidence that Third World peoples took up arms and embarked upon costly revolutionary struggles because some sinister ringmaster in Moscow or Peking cracked the whip. Revolutions are not push-button affairs; rather, they evolve only if there exists a reservoir of hope and grievance that can be galvanized into popular action. Revolutions are made when large segments of the population take courage from each other and stand up to an insufferable social order.

People are inclined to endure great abuses before risking their lives in confrontations with vastly superior armed forces. There is no such thing as a frivolous revolution, or a revolution initiated and orchestrated by a manipulative cabal residing in a foreign capital.

Nor is there evidence that once the revolution succeeded, the new leaders placed the interests of their country at the disposal of Peking or Moscow. Instead of becoming the willing puppets of "Red China," as our policy makers predicted, Vietnam found itself locked in combat with its neighbor to the north. And, as noted earlier, almost every Third World revolutionary country has tried to keep its options open and has sought friendly diplomatic and economic relations with the United States.

Why then do U.S. leaders intervene in every region and almost every nation in the world, either overtly with U.S. military force or covertly with surrogate mercenary forces, death squads, aid, bribes, manipulated media, and rigged elections? Is all this intervention just an outgrowth of a deeply conditioned anticommunist ideology? Are U.S. leaders responding to the public's longstanding phobia about the Red Menace?

Certainly many Americans are anticommunist, but this sentiment does not translate into a demand for overseas interventionism. Quite the contrary. Opinion polls over the last half-century have shown repeatedly that the U.S. public is not usually supportive of committing U.S. forces in overseas engagements and prefers friendly relations with other nations, including communist ones. Far from galvanizing our leaders into interventionist actions, popular opinion has been one of the few restraining influences.

There is no denying, however, that opinion can sometimes be successfully manipulated by jingoist ventures. The invasion of Grenada and the slaughter perpetrated against Iraq are cases in point. The quick, easy, low-cost wins reaffirmed for some Americans the feeling that we were not weak and indecisive, not sitting ducks to some foreign prey.

But even in these cases, it took an intensive and sustained propaganda barrage of half-truths and lies by the national security state and its faithful lackeys in the national media to muster some public support for military actions against Grenada and Iraq.

In sum, various leftist states do not pose a military threat to U.S. security; instead, they want to trade and live in peace with us, and are much less abusive and more helpful toward their people than the reactionary regimes they replaced.

In addition, U.S. leaders have shown little concern for freedom in the Third World and have helped subvert democracy in a number of nations. And popular opinion generally opposes interventionism by lopsided majorities. What then motivates U.S. policy and how can we think it is not confused and contradictory?

The answer is that Marxist and other leftist or revolutionary states do pose a real threat, not to the United States as a national entity and not to the American people as such, but to the corporate and financial interests of our country, to Exxon and Mobil, Chase Manhattan and First National, Ford and General Motors, Anaconda and U.S. Steel, and to capitalism as a world system.

The problem is not that revolutionaries accumulate power but that they use power to pursue substantive policies that are unacceptable to U.S. ruling circles. What bothers our political leaders (and generals, investment bankers, and corporate heads) is not the supposed lack of political democracy in these countries but their attempts to construct economic democracy, to depart from the impoverishing rigors of the international free market, to use capital and labor in a way that is inimical to the interests of multinational corporatism.

A New York Times editorial (3/30/83) referred to "the undesirable and offensive Managua regime" and the danger of seeing "Marxist power ensconced in Managua." But what specifically is so dangerous about "Marxist power?"

What was undesirable and offensive about the Sandinista government in Managua? What did it do to us? What did it do to its own people? Was it the literacy campaign?

The health care and housing programs? The land reform and development of farm cooperatives? The attempt at rebuilding Managua, at increasing production or achieving a more equitable distribution of taxes, services, and food?

In large part, yes. Such reforms, even if not openly denounced by our government, do make a country suspect because they are symptomatic of an effort to erect a new and competing economic order in which the prerogatives of wealth and corporate investment are no longer secure, and the land, labor, and resources are no longer used primarily for the accumulation of corporate profits.

U.S. leaders and the corporate-owned press would have us believe they opposed revolutionary governments because the latter do not have an opposition press or have not thrown their country open to Western style (and Western-financed) elections. U.S. leaders come closer to their true complaint when they condemn such governments for interfering with the prerogatives of the "free market."

Similarly, Henry Kissinger came close to the truth when he defended the fascist overthrow of the democratic government in Chile by noting that when obliged to choose between saving the economy or saving democracy, we must save the economy. Had Kissinger said, we must save the capitalist economy, it would have been the whole truth. For under Allende, the danger was not that the economy was collapsing (although the U.S. was doing its utmost to destabilize it); the real threat was that the economy was moving away from free-market capitalism and toward a more equitable social democracy, albeit in limited ways.

U.S. officials say they are for change just as long as it is peaceful and not violently imposed. Indeed, economic elites may some times tolerate very limited reforms, learning to give a little in order to keep a lot. But judging from Chile, Guatemala, Indonesia, and a number of other places, they have a low tolerance for changes, even peaceful ones, that tamper with the existing class structure and threaten the prerogatives of corporate and landed wealth.

To the rich and powerful it makes little difference if their interests are undone by a peaceful transformation rather than a violent upheaval. The means concern them much less than the end results. It is not the "violent" in violent revolution they hate; it is the "revolution." (Third World elites seldom perish in revolutions. The worst of them usually manage to make it to Miami, Madrid, Paris, or New York.)

They dread socialism the way the rest of us might dread poverty and hunger. So, when push comes to shove, the wealthy classes of Third World countries, with a great deal of help from the corporate-military-political elites in our country, will use fascism to preserve capitalism while claiming they are saving democracy from communism.

A socialist Cuba or a socialist North Korea, as such, are not a threat to the survival of world capitalism. The danger is not socialism in any one country but a socialism that might spread to many countries. Multinational corporations, as their name implies, need the entire world, or a very large part of it, to exploit and to invest and expand in. There can be no such thing as "capitalism in one country."

The domino theory-the view that if one country falls to the revolutionaries, others will follow in quick succession-may not work as automatically as its more fearful proponents claim, but there usually is a contagion, a power of example and inspiration, and sometimes even direct encouragement and assistance from one revolution to another.

Support the Good Guys?

If revolutions arise from the sincere aspirations of the populace, then it is time the United States identify itself with these aspirations, so liberal critics keep urging. They ask: "Why do we always find ourselves on the wrong side in the Third World? Why are we always on the side of the oppressor?"

Too bad the question is treated as a rhetorical one, for it is deserving of a response. The answer is that right-wing oppressors, however heinous they be, do not tamper with, and give full support to, private investment and profit, while the leftists pose a challenge to that system.

There are those who used to say that we had to learn from the communists, copy their techniques, and thus win the battle for the hearts and minds of the people. Can we imagine the ruling interests of the United States abiding by this? The goal is not to copy communist reforms but to prevent them.

How would U.S. interventionists try to learn from and outdo the revolutionaries? Drive out the latifundio owners and sweatshop bosses? Kick out the plundering corporations and nationalize their holdings? Imprison the militarists and torturers? Redistribute the land, use capital investment for home consumption or hard currency exchange instead of cash crop exports that profit a rich few?

Install a national health insurance program and construct hospitals and clinics at public expense? Mobilize the population for literacy campaigns and for work in publicly owned enterprises? If U.S. rulers did all this, they would have done more than defeat the communists and other revolutionaries, they would have carried out the communists' programs. They would have prevented revolution only by bringing about its effects-thereby defeating their own goals.

U.S. policy makers say they cannot afford to pick and choose the governments they support, but that is exactly what they do. And the pattern of choice is consistent through each successive administration regardless of the party or personality in office. U.S. leaders support those governments, be they autocratic or democratic in form, that are friendly toward capitalism and oppose those governments, be they autocratic or democratic, that seek to develop a noncapitalist social order.

Occasionally friendly relations are cultivated with noncapitalist nations like China if these countries show themselves in useful opposition to other socialist nations and are sufficiently open to private capital exploitation. In the case of China, the economic opportunity is so huge as to be hard to resist, the labor supply is plentiful and cheap, and the profit opportunities are great.

In any one instance, interventionist policies may be less concerned with specific investments than with protecting the global investment system. The United States had relatively little direct investment in Cuba, Vietnam, and Grenada-to mention three countries that Washington has invaded in recent years.

What was at stake in Grenada, as Reagan said, was something more than nutmeg. It was whether we would let a country develop a competing economic order, a different way of utilizing its land, labor, capital, and natural resources. A social revolution in any part of the world may or may not hurt specific U.S. corporations, but it nevertheless becomes part of a cumulative threat to private finance capital in general.

The United States will support governments that seek to suppress guerrilla movements, as in El Salvador, and will support guerrilla movements that seek to overthrow governments, as in Nicaragua. But there is no confusion or stupidity about it. It is incorrect to say, "We have no foreign policy" or "We have a stupid and confused foreign policy."

Again, it is necessary not to confuse subterfuge with stupidity. The policy is remarkably rational. Its central organizing principle is to make the world safe for the multinational corporations and the free-market capital-accumulation system. However, our rulers cannot ask the U.S. public to sacrifice their tax dollars and the lives of their sons for Exxon and Chase Manhattan, for the profit system as such, so they tell us that the interventions are for freedom and national security and the protection of unspecified "U.S. interests."

Whether policy makers believe their own arguments is not the key question. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. Sometimes presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Bill Clinton were doing their hypocritical best when their voices quavered with staged compassion for this or that oppressed people who had to be rescued from the communists or terrorists with U.S. missiles and troops, and sometimes they were sincere, as when they spoke of their fear and loathing of communism and revolution and their desire to protect U.S. investments abroad.

We need not ponder the question of whether our leaders are motivated by their class interests or by a commitment to anti-communist ideology, as if these two things were in competition with each other instead of mutually reinforcing. The arguments our leaders proffer may be self-serving and fabricated, yet also sincerely embraced. It is a creed's congruity with one's material self-interest that often makes it so compelling.

In any case, so much of politics is the rational use of irrational symbols. The arguments in support of interventionism may sound and may actually be irrational and nonsensical, but they serve a rational purpose.

Once we grasp the central consistency of U.S. foreign policy, we can move from a liberal complaint to a radical analysis, from criticizing the "foolishness" of our government's behavior to understanding why the "foolishness" is not random but persists over time against all contrary arguments and evidence, always moving in the same elitist, repressive direction.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European communist governments, U.S. leaders now have a freer hand in their interventions. A number of left reformist governments that had relied on the Soviets for economic assistance and political protection against U.S. interference now have nowhere to turn. The willingness of U.S. leaders to tolerate economic deviations does not grow with their sense of their growing power.

Quite the contrary. Now even the palest economic nationalism, as displayed in Iraq by Saddam Hussein over oil prices, invites the destructive might of the U.S. military. The goal now, as always, is to obliterate every trace of an alternative system, to make it clear that there is no road to take except that of the free market, in a world in which the many at home and abroad will work still harder for less so that the favored few will accumulate more and more wealth.

That is the vision of the future to which most U.S. leaders are implicitly dedicated. It is a vision taken from the past and never forgotten by them, a matter of putting the masses of people at home and abroad back in their place, divested of any aspirations for a better world because they are struggling too hard to survive in this one.

Michael Parenti is an internationally known award-winning author and lecturer. He is one of the nation's leading progressive political analysts. His highly informative and entertaining books and talks have reached a wide range of audiences in North America and abroad.

[Dirty Truths](#) is an eye-opening and entertaining collection of essays that investigate media and culture, conspiracy and state power, ideology and political consciousness. Parenti ranges over crucial issues of the day: free speech, the rise of neofascism, the coming ecological apocalypse, the relationship between wealth and poverty, the "terrorism" hype, the continuing mystifications about the Kennedy assassination, and the deceptions and injustices of U.S. corporate global domination. Moving from the political to the personal, Parenti shows the links between seemingly disparate social and political forces. Dirty Truths also contains three poems and moving accounts of his own ethnic family life and the political intolerance he encountered in academia. This book is a rich buffet, an enlightening and provocative feast for the mind and heart.

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Monday, June 27, 2011

Eric Margolis: Afghanistan: A Real Pullout or a Shell Game?

Afghanistan: A Real Pullout or a Shell Game?

by Eric Margolis [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 26, 2011 | CommonDreams | Eric Margolis

Far-called our navies melt away
On dune and headland sinks the fire
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
--Rudyard Kipling "*Recessional*"

NEW YORK - War is waged to achieve political objectives, not to kill enemies. In this sense, the United States has lost the ten-year Afghan conflict, its longest war. Afghanistan remains the "graveyard of empires."

The US has failed to install an obedient regime in Kabul that controls Afghanistan. It has made foes of the Pashtun majority, and, in pursuing this war, gravely undermined Pakistan. Claims that US forces were in Afghanistan to hunt the late Osama bin Laden were widely disbelieved.

Last Wednesday, President Barack Obama bowed to public opinion, approaching elections, military reality and financial woes by announcing he would withdraw a third of the 100,000 US troops from Afghanistan by the end of next summer. Pentagon brass growled open opposition.

US allies France and Germany announced similar troops reductions. All foreign troops are supposed to quit Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

Washington currently spends at least \$10 billion monthly on the Afghan war, not counting "black" payments, CIA and NSA operations. The US has poured \$18.8 billion in development aid into Afghanistan since 2001 with nothing to show for the effort. Pakistan has been given \$20 billion to support the Afghan War.

The US deficit is heading over \$1.4 trillion. The national debt, when unfunded pensions and benefits are added, is likely \$100 trillion, according to the chief of PIMCO, the world's largest bond trader.

Forty-four million Americans now receive food stamps; the national infrastructure of roads, airports, bridges and schools is crumbling from neglect. Unemployment, officially at 9.5%, is probably closer to 20%.

The cry is being heard: "Rebuild America, not Afghanistan."

In spite of intense pro-war propaganda, over half of Americans now oppose the Afghan War. Even US-installed Afghan president Hamid Karzai calls it, "ineffective, apart from causing civilian casualties."

So will the US really pull out of Afghanistan? That remains to be seen. There are contradictory signs.

Mid-level talks between the US and Taliban are under way. The US will probably keep some of its remaining 66,000 soldiers in Afghanistan after 2014, rebranding them training troops. The huge US bases at Kandahar and Bagram will be retained.

Billions more will be spent on the Afghan government army and police. They have so far proved ineffective because most are composed of Tajik and Uzbek mercenaries who are hated and distrusted by the Pashtun.

A similar process is underway in Iraq where “withdrawal” means keeping renamed US combat brigades in Iraq, thousands of mercenaries, and US combat forces in neighboring Kuwait and the Gulf. New US embassies in Baghdad and Kabul— huge, fortified complexes with their own mercenary combat forces— will be the world’s biggest. Kabul will have a staff of 1,000 US personnel. Bin Laden called them “crusader fortresses.”

In addition, the US will still arm and finance allied Tajik and Uzbek militias in Afghanistan. Financing Pakistan’s US-backed regime and Uzbekistan must also continue at around \$3 billion yearly.

The US appears to be going and staying at the same time. By contrast, Taliban’s position is clear and simple: it will continue fighting until all foreign troops are withdrawn. US special forces, drones and hit squads have been unable to assassinate enough Taliban commanders to make the mujahidin stop fighting.

Americans never study history, not even their own. They don’t recall founding father, the great Benjamin Franklin, who said, “there is no good war, and no bad peace.” Or that the Pashtun Taliban and its allies are fierce, dedicated, undefeated warriors. I’ve been in combat with them and remain in awe of their courage and love of combat. The Pashtun mujahidin will keep fighting as always, as long as their ammunition lasts.

America, for all its B-1 heavy bombers, strike fighters, missiles, helicopter gunships and drones, armor, super electronics, spies in the sky and all the other high tech weapons of modern war has failed to defeat some 30,000 tribal fighters with nothing more than small arms and legendary valor.

The US has lost the all important military initiative in Afghanistan. It may linger there, but it cannot win.

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Columnist and author **Eric Margolis** is a veteran of many conflicts in the Middle East, Margolis recently was featured in a special appearance on Britain’s Sky News TV as “the man who got it right” in his predictions about the dangerous risks and entanglements the US would face in Iraq. His latest book is [American Raj: Liberation or Domination?: Resolving the Conflict Between the West and the Muslim World](#).

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Sunday, June 26, 2011

Institutionalized Mammon Is What We Have Become

Institutionalized Mammon Is What We Have Become

The corporate creed is greed, greed in the guise of National Interest, National Security [profit warriors]; "refugee" and "immigrant" are economic designations [money classifications; evil prejudice] - Isa 28:9 "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? [them that are] weaned from the milk, [and] drawn from the breasts ..."; we must remove ourselves from our carnal "mother" [COG (Church of God) Inc., harlots, false prophets] and the corporate [COG (Continuity of Government), Beast]; our minds have been pulled down into "media" confusion, the polluted discourse of Mammon - politics is the "business" of government [corporate pimps; private trust] not stewardship government [public trust] - our attempt to fight iniquity while maintaining the excess is a contradiction !! - as long as Mammon's life-blood [its money] keeps us alive, we are part of its body, its being !! - institutionalized Mammon is what we have become: it is "the" dominant force in our world [kosmos]; it is the worship [form; veneration (psychology)], weaponization, and power of evil; corporatized money as primary consideration/arbiter !!

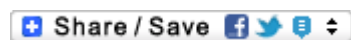
Our Very Being Must Be Called Into Question

The Bible is the "Christ Document", the definitive "Word" [the Christ re-definition: signature of love = God's verification]; the COG Inc.'s semantics of confusion vs. God's Wisdom from Above [the straight and narrow (narrowing the field, the focus; still waters, not a raging sea foaming out its shame); God's love = our Being, God's wisdom = our Doing (application of the love)] -- God is relational, the God Family is relationship(s), and God's Holy Bible is "content relationships" *together* being a "single logical document", the representative Word of God [many parts and writers, working together] !! - God's "signature of love" is His servants "key of trust", His query method is also love and humility - the collective mind of humanity will become as "one" together with God, as His Family: AGAPE MIND, no longer imprisoned by our fears, and our selfish thoughts in response !!

Any evocation is a resultant, is dependent upon our approach !! - while the various NGO's and "resistance" groups express the [physical] immune system [reaction] of the Social Body, we, as radical Christians, must express the conscience [spiritual], God's very consciousness: OUR VERY BEING [and Doing] MUST BE CALLED INTO QUESTION, A DEEP, PENETRATING EXAMINATION, BY MERCY AND TRUTH !! - we must understand who we are and what we have become, and ask repentance of God: we must ask for His forgiveness, and we must forgive each other [we are *all* complicit]; WE MUST *REPAIR* THE BREACH AND *RESTORE* THE PATHS TO DWELL IN, *IN* LOVE !! - every man and every woman has a [sacred] voice that must be heard, his or her story; an independent media vs. the corporate voice, the voice of Mammon; God speaks to every one of us individually, we should follow His example [the signature of God and His truth is agape love] !!

Mammon or Messiah meta [article link](#)

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A "Society of the Gift"



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Chris Marsden: Wealth Of World's Richest Rose Nearly 10 Percent In 2010

Wealth Of World's Richest Rose Nearly 10 Percent In 2010

by Chris Marsden [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 25, 2011 | Countercurrents | WSWS

Austerity measures, wage cuts and rising unemployment have characterised the years since the crash of 2008 for working people. For the rich and super-rich, however, they have been the occasion for clawing back every penny of the initial losses made and adding a great deal more.

Today, the world's wealthy are richer than before the crash and the number of individuals belonging to this highly exclusive club has grown.

The annual world wealth report by Merrill Lynch and Capgemini identifies nearly 11 million "high net worth individuals" (HNWIs), defined as having more than \$1 million in free cash, not including property and pensions. Their collective wealth reached \$42.7 trillion in 2010, a 9.7 percent rise. This means that the wealth of this social layer has already surpassed the previous peak of \$40.7 trillion reached in 2007.

The number of individuals worldwide who fall into this category grew 8.3 percent in 2010. This is described as a return to a "more sustainable pace," following the 17 percent growth in the number of HNWIs to 10 million recorded in last year's report.

To make clear the scale of individual wealth accumulation these figures represent, one needs to factor in the results for what are termed "ultra-high net worth individuals," defined as having at least \$30 million in free cash. The numbers in this group rose by 10 percent, to just 103,000. But their assets rose by 11.5 percent, giving them control of \$15 trillion. That means that the top one percent of the world's rich controls fully 36 percent of their collective assets.

The largest number of HNWIs continue to reside in the United States, followed by Japan and Germany. These countries together account for 53 percent of the world's rich. The US has 3.1 million HNWIs, Japan 1.7 million and Germany 920,000.

The wealth of the richest 3.4 million people in North America, overwhelmingly in the US, rose by 9 percent to \$11.6 trillion. The US is home to 28.6 percent of the world's richest people.

Europe's HNWIs fared less well generally. Nevertheless, the UK still sits at fourth in the league table, with France coming in fifth. Europe's 3.1 million HNWIs have \$10.2 trillion in free cash.

The far better performance of the HNWIs in the Asia-Pacific region has caused consternation among ruling elites in Europe and North America. The number of HNWIs in the Asia-Pacific region rose by almost 10 percent to 3.3 million in 2010. This was the largest regional growth rate, and the number of HNWIs in the Asia-Pacific region surpassed the European total as well as that of the US. It was only 100,000 lower than the total for the whole of North America. This elite layer in Asia now controls a total of \$10.8 trillion in free cash.

Leading this growth in opulence are China and India. The number of mainland Chinese HNWI millionaires grew by fully 12 percent to 534,500 people, to which must be added the extraordinary growth of the wealthy elite in Hong Kong. The number of HNWIs there grew by 33.3 percent to 101,300, compared with 76,000 in 2009.

India, for its part, saw a 20.8 percent rise to 153,000 in the number of HNWIs, the highest rate of growth of any country. India for the first time placed in the top 12 in terms of the number of HNWI millionaires.

The Hindustan Times commented tellingly, "India may still have a long way to go in eliminating poverty, but high economic growth is throwing up millionaires by the thousands... The country, ranked 138th on the basis of per capita income by the IMF and 119th in the UN's human development rankings based on indicators such as life expectancy and education, added in 2010 as many as 26,300 HNWIs..."

In the Middle East, the absolute numbers are smaller, but this only serves to underscore the scale of personal accumulation by that region's rich. Just 400,000 people in the region control \$1.7 trillion in free cash. The number of HNWIs in Kuwait and Bahrain rose by a quarter, putting these countries sixth and seventh in the table of 71 countries.

Tamer Rashad, head of Middle East operations at Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, noted in Arabian Business that one aspect of the vast accumulation of wealth by the super-rich was "the significantly high ratio of savings to gross domestic product." This ratio has reached 54 percent in Bahrain and 40 percent in Saudi Arabia, compared to the more usual single-digit rates in developed countries such as the US.

The extreme social polarisation hinted at in these figures is what ultimately gave rise to the mass movements that ended in the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and the mass protests throughout the region.

But the figures assembled by Merrill Lynch and Capgemini, presented as a celebration of the good fortune of this financial elite, signal that a far broader worldwide eruption of the class struggle is being prepared.

The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US \$1.25 per day, and moderate poverty as living on less than \$2 a day. In 2001, some 1.1 billion people lived on less than \$1 a day and 2.7 billion on less than \$2 a day. Almost half of the world's people—3 billion souls—live on less than \$2.50 a day. One billion children—fully 50 percent of the world's children—live in poverty. Six million children die of hunger every year, 17,000 every day.

The irrational and unconscionable squandering of wealth on a handful of parasites on the one hand, and the crushing burden of poverty, hunger and misery on billions of people on the other constitutes an unanswerable indictment of the capitalist system.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [5:09 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Saturday, June 25, 2011

Sara Flounders: The Pentagon and Slave Labor in U.S. Prisons

The Pentagon and Slave Labor in U.S. Prisons

by Sara Flounders [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 23, 2011 | Global Research | International Action Center

Prisoners earning 23 cents an hour in U.S. federal prisons are manufacturing high-tech electronic components for Patriot Advanced Capability 3 missiles, launchers for TOW (Tube-launched, Optically tracked, Wire-guided) anti-tank missiles, and other guided missile systems. A March article by journalist and financial researcher Justin Rohrlich of World in Review is worth a closer look at the full implications of this ominous development. (minyanville.com)

The expanding use of prison industries, which pay slave wages, as a way to increase profits for giant military corporations, is a frontal attack on the rights of all workers.

Prison labor — with no union protection, overtime pay, vacation days, pensions, benefits, health and safety protection, or Social Security withholding — also makes complex components for McDonnell Douglas/Boeing's F-15 fighter aircraft, the General Dynamics/Lockheed Martin F-16, and Bell/Textron's Cobra helicopter. Prison labor produces night-vision goggles, body armor, camouflage uniforms, radio and communication devices, and lighting systems and components for 30-mm to 300-mm battleship anti-aircraft guns, along with land mine sweepers and electro-optical equipment for the BAE Systems Bradley Fighting Vehicle's laser rangefinder. Prisoners recycle toxic electronic equipment and overhaul military vehicles.

Labor in federal prisons is contracted out by UNICOR, previously known as Federal Prison Industries, a quasi-public, for-profit corporation run by the Bureau of Prisons. In 14 prison factories, more than 3,000 prisoners manufacture electronic equipment for land, sea and airborne communication. UNICOR is now the U.S. government's 39th largest contractor, with 110 factories at 79 federal penitentiaries.

The majority of UNICOR's products and services are on contract to orders from the Department of Defense. Giant multinational corporations purchase parts assembled at some of the lowest labor rates in the world, then resell the finished weapons components at the highest rates of profit. For example, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Corporation subcontract components, then assemble and sell advanced weapons systems to the Pentagon.

Increased profits, unhealthy workplaces

However, the Pentagon is not the only buyer. U.S. corporations are the world's largest arms dealers, while weapons and aircraft are the largest U.S. export. The U.S. State Department, Department of Defense and diplomats pressure NATO members and dependent countries around the world into multibillion-dollar weapons purchases that generate further corporate profits, often leaving many countries mired in enormous debt.

But the fact that the capitalist state has found yet another way to drastically undercut union workers' wages and ensure still higher profits to military corporations — whose weapons wreak such havoc around the world — is an ominous development.

According to CNN Money, the U.S. highly skilled and well-paid "aerospace workforce has shrunk by 40 percent in the past 20 years. Like many other industries, the defense sector has been quietly outsourcing production (and jobs) to cheaper labor markets overseas." (Feb. 24) It seems that with prison labor, these jobs are also being outsourced domestically.

Meanwhile, dividends and options to a handful of top stockholders and CEO compensation packages at top military corporations exceed the total payment of wages to the more than 23,000 imprisoned workers who produce UNICOR parts.

The prison work is often dangerous, toxic and unprotected. At FCC Victorville, a federal prison located at an old U.S. airbase, prisoners clean, overhaul and reassemble tanks and military vehicles returned from combat and coated in toxic spent ammunition, depleted uranium dust and chemicals.

A federal lawsuit by prisoners, food service workers and family members at FCI Marianna, a minimum security women's prison in Florida, cited that toxic dust containing lead, cadmium, mercury and arsenic poisoned those who worked at UNICOR's computer and electronic recycling factory.

Prisoners there worked covered in dust, without safety equipment, protective gear, air filtration or masks. The suit explained that the toxic dust caused severe damage to nervous and reproductive systems, lung damage, bone disease, kidney failure, blood clots, cancers, anxiety, headaches, fatigue, memory lapses, skin lesions, and circulatory and respiratory problems. This is one of eight federal prison recycling facilities — employing 1,200 prisoners — run by UNICOR.

After years of complaints the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General and the Federal Occupational Health Service concurred in October 2008 that UNICOR has jeopardized the lives and safety of untold numbers of prisoners and staff. (Prison Legal News, Feb. 17, 2009)

Racism & U.S. prisons

The U.S. imprisons more people per capita than any country in the world. With less than 5 percent of the world population, the U.S. imprisons more than 25 percent of all people imprisoned in the world.

There are more than 2.3 million prisoners in federal, state and local prisons in the U.S. Twice as many people are under probation and parole. Many tens of thousands of other prisoners include undocumented immigrants facing deportation, prisoners awaiting sentencing and youthful offenders in categories considered reform or detention.

The racism that pervades every aspect of life in capitalist society — from jobs, income and housing to education and opportunity — is most brutally reflected by who is caught up in the U.S. prison system.

More than 60 percent of U.S. prisoners are people of color. Seventy percent of those being sentenced under the three strikes law in California — which requires mandatory sentences of 25 years to life after three felony convictions — are people of color. Nationally, 39 percent of African-American men in their 20s are in prison, on probation or on parole. The U.S. imprisons more people than South Africa did under apartheid. (Linn Washington, "Incarceration Nation")

The U.S. prison population is not only the largest in the world — it is relentlessly growing. The U.S. prison population is more than five times what it was 30 years ago.

In 1980, when Ronald Reagan became president, there were 400,000 prisoners in the U.S. Today the number exceeds 2.3 million. In California the prison population soared from 23,264 in 1980 to 170,000 in 2010. The Pennsylvania prison population climbed from 8,243 to 51,487 in those same years. There are now more African-American men in prison, on probation or on parole than were enslaved in 1850, before the Civil War began, according to Law Professor Michelle Alexander in the book "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness."

Today a staggering 1-in-100 adults in the U.S. are living behind bars. But this crime, which breaks families and destroys lives, is not evenly distributed. In major urban areas one-half of Black men have criminal records. This means life-long, legalized discrimination in student loans, financial assistance, access to public housing, mortgages, the right to vote and, of course, the possibility of being hired for a job.

State Prisons contracting slave labor

It is not only federal prisons that contract out prison labor to top corporations. State prisons that used forced prison labor in plantations, laundries and highway chain gangs increasingly seek to sell prison labor to corporations trolling the globe in search of the cheapest possible labor.

One agency asks: “Are you experiencing high employee turnover? Worried about the costs of employee benefits? Unhappy with out-of-state or offshore suppliers? Getting hit by overseas competition? Having trouble motivating your workforce? Thinking about expansion space? Then Washington State Department of Corrections Private Sector Partnerships is for you.” (educate-yourself.org, July 25, 2005)

Major corporations profiting from the slave labor of prisoners include Motorola, Compaq, Honeywell, Microsoft, Boeing, Revlon, Chevron, TWA, Victoria’s Secret and Eddie Bauer.

IBM, Texas Instruments and Dell get circuit boards made by Texas prisoners. Tennessee inmates sew jeans for Kmart and JCPenney. Tens of thousands of youth flipping hamburgers for minimum wages at McDonald’s wear uniforms sewn by prison workers, who are forced to work for much less.

In California, as in many states, prisoners who refuse to work are moved to disciplinary housing and lose canteen privileges as well as “good time” credit, which slices hard time off their sentences.

Systematic abuse, beatings, prolonged isolation and sensory deprivation, and lack of medical care make U.S. prison conditions among the worst in the world. Ironically, working under grueling conditions for pennies an hour is treated as a “perk” for good behavior.

In December, Georgia inmates went on strike and refused to leave their cells at six prisons for more than a week. In one of the largest prison protests in U.S. history, prisoners spoke of being forced to work seven days a week for no pay. Prisoners were beaten if they refused to work.

Private prisons for profit

In the ruthless search to maximize profits and grab hold of every possible source of income, almost every public agency and social service is being outsourced to private for-profit contractors.

In the U.S. military this means there are now more private contractors and mercenaries in Iraq and Afghanistan than there are U.S. or NATO soldiers.

In cities and states across the U.S., hospitals, medical care facilities, schools, cafeterias, road maintenance, water supply services, sewage departments, sanitation, airports and tens of thousands of social programs that receive public funding are being contracted out to for-profit corporations. Anything publicly owned and paid for by generations of past workers’ taxes — from libraries to concert halls and parks — is being sold or leased at fire sale prices.

All this is motivated and lobbied for by right-wing think tanks like that set up by Koch Industries and their owners, Charles and David Koch, as a way to cut costs, lower wages and pensions, and undercut public service unions.

The most gruesome privatizations are the hundreds of for-profit prisons being established.

The inmate population in private for-profit prisons tripled between 1987 and 2007. By 2007 there were 264 such prison facilities, housing almost 99,000 adult prisoners. (house.leg.state.mn.us, Feb. 24, 2009) Companies operating such facilities include the Corrections Corporation of America, the GEO Group Inc. and Community Education Centers.

Prison bonds provide a lucrative return for capitalist investors such as Merrill-Lynch, Shearson Lehman, American Express and Allstate. Prisoners are traded from one state to another based on the most profitable arrangements.

Militarism and prisons

Hand in hand with the military-industrial complex, U.S. imperialism has created a massive prison-industrial complex that generates billions of dollars annually for businesses and industries profiting from mass incarceration.

For decades workers in the U.S. have been assured that they also benefit from imperialist looting by the giant multinational corporations. But today more than half the federal budget is absorbed by the costs of maintaining the military machine and the corporations who are guaranteed profits for equipping the Pentagon. That is the only budget category in federal spending that is guaranteed to increase by at least 5 percent a year — at a time when every social program is being cut to the bone.

The sheer economic weight of militarism seeps into the fabric of society at every level. It fuels racism and reaction. The political influence of the Pentagon and the giant military and oil corporations — with their thousands of high-paid lobbyists, media pundits and network of links into every police force in the country — fuels growing repression and an expanding prison population.

The military, oil and banking conglomerates, interlinked with the police and prisons, have a stranglehold on the U.S. capitalist economy and reins of political power, regardless of who is president or what political party is in office. The very survival of these global corporations is based on immediate maximization of profits. They are driven to seize every resource and source of potential profits.

Thoroughly rational solutions are proposed whenever the human and economic cost of militarism and repression is discussed. The billions spent for war and fantastically destructive weapons systems could provide five to seven times more jobs if spent on desperately needed social services, education and rebuilding essential infrastructure. Or it could provide free university education, considering the fact that it costs far more to imprison people than to educate them.

Why aren't such reasonable solutions ever chosen? Because military contracts generate far larger guaranteed profits to the military and the oil industries, which have a decisive influence on the U.S. economy.

The prison-industrial complex — including the prison system, prison labor, private prisons, police and repressive apparatus, and their continuing expansion — are a greater source of profit and are reinforced by the climate of racism and reaction. Most rational and socially useful solutions are not considered viable options.

Sara Flounders is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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John Pilger: Brainwashing the Corporate Way

Brainwashing the Corporate Way

by John Pilger [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 24, 2011 | Global Research | John Pilger

One of the most original and provocative books of the past decade is *Disciplined Minds* by Jeff Schmidt (Rowman & Littlefield). “A critical look at salaried professionals,” says the cover, “and the soul-battering system that shapes their lives.” Its theme is postmodern America but also applies to Britain, where the corporate state has bred a new class of Americanised manager to run the private and public sectors: the banks, the main parties, corporations, important committees, the BBC.

Professionals are said to be meritorious and non-ideological. Yet, in spite of their education, writes Schmidt, they think less independently than non-professionals. They use corporate jargon – “model”, “performance”, “targets”, “strategic oversight”. In *Disciplined Minds*, Schmidt argues that what makes the modern professional is not technical knowledge but “ideological discipline”. Those in higher education and the media do “political work” but in a way that is not seen as political. Listen to a senior BBC person sincerely describe the nirvana of neutrality to which he or she has risen. “Taking sides” is anathema; and yet the modern professional knows never to challenge the “built-in ideology of the status quo”. What matters is the “right attitude”.

A key to training professionals is what Schmidt calls “assignable curiosity”. Children are naturally curious, but along the way to becoming a professional they learn that curiosity is a series of tasks assigned by others. On entering training, students are optimistic and idealistic. On leaving, they are “pressured and troubled” because they realise that “the primary goal for many is getting compensated sufficiently for sidelining their original goals”. I have met many young people, especially budding journalists, who would recognise themselves in this description. For no matter how indirect its effect, the primary influence of professional managers is the extreme political cult of money worship and inequality known as neoliberalism.

The ultimate professional manager is Bob Diamond, the CEO of Barclays Bank in London, who got a £6.5m bonus in March. More than 200 Barclays managers took home £554m in total last year. In January, Diamond told the Commons Treasury select committee that “the time for remorse is over”. He was referring to the £1trn of public money handed unconditionally to corrupted banks by a Labour government whose leader, Gordon Brown, had described such “financiers” as his personal “inspiration”.

This was the final act of corporate coup d’état, now disguised by a specious debate about “cuts” and a “national deficit”. The most humane premises of British life are to be eliminated. The “value” of the cuts is said to be £83bn, almost exactly the amount of tax legally avoided by the banks and corporations. That the British public continues to give the banks an additional annual subsidy of £100bn in free insurance and guarantees – a figure that would fund the entire National Health Service – is suppressed.

So, too, is the absurdity of the very notion of “cuts”. When Britain was officially bankrupt following the Second World War, there was full employment and some of its greatest public institutions, such as the Health Service, were built. Yet “cuts” are managed by those who say they oppose them and manufacture consent for their wider acceptance. This is the role of the Labour Party’s professional managers.

In matters of war and peace, Schmidt’s disciplined minds promote violence, death and mayhem on a scale still unrecognised in Britain. In spite of damning evidence to the Chilcot inquiry by the former intelligence chief Major General Michael Laurie, the “core business” manager, Alastair Campbell, remains at large, as do all the other war managers who toiled with Blair and at the Foreign Office to justify and sell the beckoning bloodbath in Iraq.

The reputable media play a critical often subtle role. Frederick Ogilvie, who succeeded the BBC's founder, Lord Reith, as director general, wrote that his goal was to turn the BBC into a "fully effective instrument of war". Ogilvie would have been delighted with his 21st-century managers. In the run-up to the Iraq invasion, the BBC's coverage overwhelmingly echoed the government's mendacious position, as studies by the University of Wales and Media Tenor show.

However, the great Arab uprising cannot be easily managed, or appropriated, with omissions and caveats, as an exchange on the BBC's Today programme on 16 May made clear. With his celebrated professionalism, honed in corporate speeches, John Humphrys interviewed a Palestinian spokesman, Husam Zomlot, following Israel's massacre of unarmed demonstrators on the 63rd anniversary of the illegal expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homes.

Humphrys: . . . it's not surprising that Israel reacted the way it did, is it?

Zomlot: . . . I am very proud and glad [they were] peacefully marching only to . . . really to draw attention to their 63-year plight.

Humphrys: But they did not march peacefully, that's my point . . .

Zomlot: None of them . . . was armed . . . [They were] opposed to Israeli tanks and helicopters and F-16s. You cannot even start to compare the violence . . . This is not a security matter . . . [the Israelis] always fail to deal with such a purely political, humanitarian, legal matter . . .

Humphrys: Sorry to interrupt you there but . . . if I marched into your house waving a club and throwing a stone at you then it would be a security matter, wouldn't it?

Zomlot: I beg your pardon. According to the United Nations Security Council resolutions, those people are marching to their homes; they have the deeds of their homes; it's their private property. So let's set the record right once and for all . . .

It was a rare moment. Setting the record straight is not a managerial "target".

John Pilger is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Friday, June 24, 2011

Robert Parry: Afghan War: No Vietnam Redux

Exclusive: Many on the American Left are furious with Barack Obama — and find nothing to praise in his gradual troop drawdown in Afghanistan. But the President's speech may be seen, in retrospect, as an important turning point in U.S. war policy toward the Muslim world as well as a signal that the Afghan conflict will not follow the pattern of the Vietnam War with one incremental escalation after the next, Robert Parry reports.

Afghan War: No Vietnam Redux

by Robert Parry [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 24, 2011 | OpEdNews | Consortium News

Sometimes the American Left won't recognize its own success. Despite disappointment over President Barack Obama's overall handling of the Afghan War, his announcement that he is reversing the escalation and beginning a drawdown is a significant development suggesting that Afghanistan won't become "another Vietnam" as the Left had feared.

Indeed, Obama's speech Wednesday night could be compared to John F. Kennedy's tentative moves at a similar point in his presidency to begin backing away from a major expansion of the Vietnam War, a process that was reversed only after Kennedy's assassination on Nov. 22, 1963.

Clearly, Kennedy and Obama made initial foreign policy mistakes, largely due to their selection of advisers. Kennedy retained too much of the Republican military brass – the likes of Gen. Curtis LeMay – and brought in too many of his own "best and brightest" war hawks – such as the Bundy brothers.

Similarly, Obama surrounded himself with a mix of Republican holdovers from George W. Bush's administration, such as Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Gen. David Petraeus, and Democratic neocon-lites, like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

And, much as Kennedy bowed to his hawkish advisers when he approved the CIA's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba early in his presidency, Obama let himself be boxed in by Gates, Petraeus and Clinton in regards to a sizable escalation of the war in Afghanistan. For both presidents, this was part of the learning curve, but Kennedy and Obama seemed to have benefitted from the negative experience.

Kennedy figured out ways to maneuver around the hawks during the dangerous Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and appeared headed toward a pullout of U.S. advisers assigned to Vietnam before his fateful trip to Dallas in 1963.

For his part, Obama has eased Gates into retirement, replacing him at the Pentagon with CIA Director Leon Panetta, who has quietly emerged as a key foreign policy adviser to Obama and who has pushed for a more limited (or precise) use of military power, a strategy that Obama embraced in his speech on Wednesday.

"When threatened we must respond with force," Obama said. "But when that force can be targeted, we need not deploy large armies overseas."

This doctrinal shift by Obama – a not-so-subtle slap at George W. Bush and the neocons – also represented a victory for Vice President Joe Biden, who had opposed the Afghan "surge" in 2009, favoring a narrower counterterrorism strategy over the counterinsurgency approach sought by Gates, Petraeus and Clinton.

Indeed, the key losers on Wednesday were that same trio – Gates, Petraeus and Clinton – who favored only a token withdrawal of 5,000 troops now and the retention of the nearly full "surge" force in Afghanistan through the entire fighting season of 2012.

Instead, Obama is ordering the withdrawal of 10,000 troops this year and the rest of the 30,000 or so “surge” troops by next summer.

Neocon Angst

The capital’s still-influential neoconservatives howled at this decision, with their flagship newspaper, The Washington Post, accusing Obama of strategic incoherence.

“The president risks undermining not only the war on the ground but also the efforts to draw elements of the Taliban into a political settlement,” the Post stated in its lead editorial, entitled “[End of a Surge](#).” Reflecting elite neocon opinion, the Post’s editors favored maintaining the “surge” force through the fall of 2012 so it could “sweep eastern provinces” of Afghanistan.

Sources with insight into Obama’s thinking also suggest that Clinton’s influence is on the wane, partly because she pressed for a deeper U.S. military commitment in Libya than Obama wanted.

Clinton and some European allies succeeded in forcing the President’s hand regarding the initial intervention to stop a feared mass killing of Libyans opposed to dictator Muammar Gaddafi. But a bloody stalemate has followed after the same grouping blocked any negotiations with Gaddafi and Obama balked at making a major military commitment to the oust-Gaddafi campaign.

One of the key harmful results of the Libyan conflict has been the cutoff of easily refined Libyan crude, contributing to a spike in oil prices. That, in turn, drove American gasoline to more than \$4 a gallon, dealing a blow to the fragile economic recovery and worsening Obama’s reelection prospects.

On Thursday, the Obama administration’s release of 30 million gallons of oil from U.S. emergency reserves was meant to bring global supplies roughly in line with what they were before the cutoff of Libyan oil. If the Libyan crisis had not arisen or had been resolved peacefully, the impact of higher oil prices might not have been so adverse.

Thus, Clinton’s neocon-lite enthusiasm for “regime change” in Libya is regarded as a factor in weighing down the U.S. economy and dimming Obama’s reelection hopes. That has further alienated Clinton from Obama’s inner circle which had hoped to be showcasing the prospect of the Arab Spring bringing non-violent political change to the region.

With Gates leaving and Clinton on the outs, the third member of the trio, neocon-favorite Gen. Petraeus, has been tapped to replace Panetta at CIA. However, there is talk about Petraeus taking much of the summer off to recuperate from his difficult tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When Petraeus does get to CIA – assuming there are no change in plans – he will have a prestigious job but one whose influence depends on access to the president. As a relative outsider, Petraeus is not considered likely to have the clout that Panetta achieved.

So, Obama’s Afghan War speech and the events that have surrounded it suggest a decline in neocon influence inside the U.S. government, which the anti-imperialists on the Left (and the Right) might be expected to welcome.

Vanity of Perfectionism

However, for many on the American Left, Obama’s gradual withdrawal from Afghanistan and his continued pullout from Iraq have amounted to too little too late. Some leftists now regard Obama as the enemy and have essentially embraced the mantra of Ralph Nader’s Green Party campaign in 2000, that “there’s not a dime’s worth of difference” between the Republicans and the Democrats.

Though I have encountered many practical people on the Left who understand the difficult realities of modern-day American politics – especially the structural imbalance between a powerful and well-funded Right and a weak Left – I also have met a number of leftists who display what might be called the vanity of perfectionism.

For them, staking out the perfect intellectual position is more important than achieving social reforms that might help society or adopting a practical foreign policy that could save lives.

These folks really don't see any meaningful difference between, say, Al Gore and George W. Bush, even though a Gore presidency last decade would have surely made the battle against climate change a high priority while Bush ignored the problem and helped build a right-wing political movement that continues to deny the science of global warming.

That "perfectionist" brand of leftists also accepts no blame for anything that happened under Bush, even though Nader's campaign hurt Gore nationally and kept the margin in the key state of Florida close enough for Bush to steal it.

It now appears that a parallel dynamic is taking shape for Election 2012, with these same elements of the Left determined to deny Obama a second term, almost as much as the Republicans are.

In Obama's case, where more sympathetic observers might see a liberal-minded politician trying to maneuver through the Washington mine field toward a more peaceful world, his critics on the Left see a committed imperialist who is just as much a warmonger as Bush ever was, if not worse.

Therefore, it's not likely that Obama's nuanced shifts toward disengagement in Afghanistan, along with his ongoing pullout from Iraq, will earn Obama much credit.

While the Left may view Kennedy more charitably in retrospect because of evidence that he was turning away from the Vietnam War, there is far less sympathy for Obama despite a similar pattern in his presidency.

Yet, Obama, like Kennedy, seems to have learned from some early mistakes and is now trying to tack the ship of state, against some strong winds, toward a more peaceful harbor.

Whether the President can accomplish this course correction – despite gusts from Washington's still powerful neocons – remains to be seen. He also faces strong economic headwinds that could doom his reelection, and he can expect only spotty backing from U.S. progressives.

So, it is possible that Obama's reversal on the Afghan War escalation might be reversed again, if a Republican replaces him in 2013 and restores the neocons to their prior dominant position in directing U.S. foreign policy.

Whatever a Republican presidential candidate may say now, the fact is that the neocons remain a key force inside the GOP's foreign policy establishment, as witnessed by the failure of Rep. Paul Ryan's austerity budget to make any significant cuts in military spending.

But today there is reason for optimism among the many Americans who have lamented the near-decade-long U.S. war in Afghanistan (and the broader conflict in the Muslim world). The trend is finally away from escalation, away from Vietnam Redux, and toward a possible (if imperfect) peace.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

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Thursday, June 23, 2011

[Linh Dinh: Sentimental Mass Murderer](#)

Sentimental Mass Murderer

by Linh Dinh [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 23, 2011 | CommonDreams | OpEdNews

When Obama came into power, there were roughly 35,000 American troops in Afghanistan. Within two years, he tripled that number. Now, Obama announces that 10,000 soldiers will come home by the end of 2011, and 33,000 by the end of next summer. He surges twice, pulls back once, and declares it a successful withdrawal, as promised. I'm sure glad Obama's not my accountant, or both of us would be arrested for fraud, but wait a sec, Obama is my accountant, and my banker, and my president.

And why are we in Afghanistan? Officially, we are there to fight the Taliban, whom we propped up in the first place. Democratic Jimmy Carter and Republican Ronald Reagan armed, financed and trained these freedom fighters or Islamofascists. In the 1980's, America poured gasoline onto the flames of Islamic fanaticism to burn down the Soviets. Now, we are the Soviets.

America goes into Iraq and Afghanistan, turns these countries upside down, then explains that it would be irresponsible to leave them topsy-turvy, but as long as America stays there, these countries will remain messed up. America causes bombs to explode, then insists that it has to stay put until these bombs stop exploding, but America is the bomb! Time and time again, America has set the fire, then shows up as a volunteer firefighter. Such is the burden of being a world leader in freedom, democracy and weapon sales.

America, you are a sentimental mass murderer. You wage war after war, then pretend to mourn for some of the victims. (The "us" victims, not the "them" victims.) As Barack sends America's sons and daughters into these needless carnages, Michelle urges us to value their pointless sacrifices.

While our grunts perform their imperial overstretch duties overseas, their loved ones struggle back home, so Michelle wants us offer these families comfort and assistance, "It can be helping a neighbor mow their lawn. People can volunteer to babysit for an afternoon, cook a meal, offer to fix a heater, or reach out to a reserve family living away from the support of a military installation." Of course, these hardships could be avoided if we would only stop sending our gung ho fodder all over to kill and maim, and sometimes be wiped out in turns.

As the husband kills, the wife comforts, but often, this janus trick is performed by the selfsame joker. It has become an annual rite for Colin Powell to give a solemn speech on the Capitol lawn on Memorial Day. This year, he again paid tribute to Americans "fighting the global war against terrorism, serving and sacrificing in Afghanistan and Iraq and at other outposts on the front lines of freedom. The life of each and every one of them is precious to their loved ones and to our nation. And each life given in the name of liberty is a life that has not been lost in vain."

Though Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11 and had no weapons of mass destruction, Powell can claim, even now and with a straight face, that it is a front line of the war against terrorism. Done with his unctuous and hypocritical verbiage, Powell went into the crowd to hug a dozen vets and their loved ones. He patted the baby of a brain-damaged and blind man. Why no one, but no one, stood up and shouted, "Hey, Powell, wasn't it you who helped to lie us into war? Didn't you stand in front of the whole world and pointed to bogus satellite photos of 'mobile laboratories for making biological weapons'?" In contemporary America, an architect of war can play at consoling its victims, and no one will bat an eye.

We are also led to believe that the people we bomb, shoot and rape are our beneficiaries. According to Yahoo! News, the withdrawal of American troops brings “a mix of joy and concern [among Afghans] as the nation struggles with the idea of less assistance,” so to invade a country is to assist it, but such is the logics of empire. Next time someone shoots you, know that you’re being assisted.

The empire is going broke, however, so our victims should voluntarily send us loads of cash. Visiting Baghdad, congressman Rohrabacher (CA) declared, "Once Iraq becomes a very rich and prosperous country... we would hope that some consideration be given to repaying the United States some of the mega-dollars that we have spent here in the last eight years. We were hoping that there would be a consideration of a payback because the United States right now is in close to a very serious economic crisis and we could certainly use some people to care about our situation as we have cared about theirs." Bombed by Obama, Libyans should feel a similar gratitude, "If the Libyans for example are willing to help pay, compensate the United States, for what we would spend in helping them through this rough period, that's one way to do it."

With one hand, Uncle Sam will shoot you. With the other, he’ll jiggle the tin cup. Give it up already, all you bloody ingrates! America’s in deep, deep trouble. With our media the way they are, our leaders will continue speak nonsense and there’s nothing we can do about it.

America needs an urgent triage, but none is forthcoming. As she decays, festers and convulses, our next president is asked, “Deep dish or thin crust? American Idol or Dancing with the Stars?”

Linh Dinh is the author of two books of stories, five of poems, and a just released novel, [Love Like Hate](#). He's tracking our deteriorating socialscape through his frequently updated photo blog, [State of the Union](#).

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Reflections on Troop Withdrawal in Afghanistan

by H. Patricia Hynes [article link](#)

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Obama's 10,000 Troop Spit In The Ocean-- Not Even Close to Good Enough

by Rob Kall [article link](#)

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In Afghanistan Speech, Obama Offers Token Troop Withdrawals While Maintaining the "War on Terror" Mindset

by Phyllis Bennis [article link](#)

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Nine War Words That Define Our World

by Tom Engelhardt [article link](#) [article link](#)

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The West Is Terrified of Arabic Democracies

interview Noam Chomsky [article link](#)

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Chapter 1 of Against Empire

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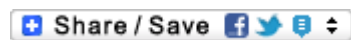
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by Bill Boyarsky [article link](#)

June 23, 2011 | Truthdig

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[Environmental Leaders Call for Civil Disobedience to Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline](#)

Environmental Leaders Call for Civil Disobedience to Stop the Keystone XL Pipeline

by Naomi Klein, Wendell Berry, Maude Barlow, Bill McKibben and Others [article link](#)

June 23, 2011 | CommonDreams

Dear Friends,

This will be a slightly longer letter than common for the internet age—it's serious stuff.

The short version is we want you to consider doing something hard: coming to Washington in the hottest and stickiest weeks of the summer and engaging in civil disobedience that will likely get you arrested.

The full version goes like this:

As you know, the planet is steadily warming: 2010 was the warmest year on record, and we've seen the resulting chaos in almost every corner of the earth.

And as you also know, our democracy is increasingly controlled by special interests interested only in their short-term profit.

These two trends collide this summer in Washington, where the State Department and the White House have to decide whether to grant a certificate of 'national interest' to some of the biggest fossil fuel players on earth. These corporations want to build the so-called 'Keystone XL Pipeline' from Canada's tar sands to Texas refineries.

To call this project a horror is serious understatement. The tar sands have wrecked huge parts of Alberta, disrupting ways of life in indigenous communities—First Nations communities in Canada, and tribes along the pipeline route in the U.S. have demanded the destruction cease. The pipeline crosses crucial areas like the Oglalla Aquifer where a spill would be disastrous—and though the pipeline companies insist they are using 'state of the art' technologies that should leak only once every 7 years, the precursor pipeline and its pumping stations have leaked a dozen times in the past year. These local impacts alone would be cause enough to block such a plan. But the Keystone Pipeline would also be a fifteen hundred mile fuse to the biggest carbon bomb on the continent, a way to make it easier and faster to trigger the final overheating of our planet, the one place to which we are all indigenous.

How much carbon lies in the recoverable tar sands of Alberta? A recent calculation from some of our foremost scientists puts the figure at about 200 parts per million. Even with the new pipeline they won't be able to burn that much overnight—but each development like this makes it easier to get more oil out. As the climatologist Jim Hansen (one of the signatories to this letter) explained, if we have any chance of getting back to a stable climate “the principal requirement is that coal emissions must be phased out by 2030 and unconventional fossil fuels, such as tar sands, must be left in the ground.” In other words, he added, “if the tar sands are thrown into the mix it is essentially game over.” The Keystone pipeline is an essential part of the game. “Unless we get increased market access, like with Keystone XL, we're going to be stuck,” said Ralph Glass, an economist and vice-president at AJM Petroleum Consultants in Calgary, told a Canadian newspaper last week.

Given all that, you'd suspect that there's no way the Obama administration would ever permit this pipeline. But in the last few months the president has signed pieces of paper opening much of Alaska to oil drilling, and permitting coal-mining on federal land in Wyoming that will produce as much CO₂ as 300 power plants operating at full bore.

And Secretary of State Clinton has already said she's ‘inclined’ to recommend the pipeline go forward. Partly it's because of the political commotion over high gas prices, though more tar sands oil would do nothing to change that picture. But it's also because of intense pressure from industry. TransCanada Pipeline, the company behind Keystone, has hired as its chief lobbyist for the project a man named Paul Elliott, who served as deputy national director of Clinton's presidential campaign. Meanwhile, the US Chamber of Commerce—a bigger funder of political campaigns than the RNC and DNC combined—has demanded that the administration “move quickly to approve the Keystone XL pipeline,” which is not so surprising—they've also told the U.S. EPA that if the planet warms that will be okay because humans can ‘adapt their physiology’ to cope. The Koch Brothers, needless to say, are also backing the plan, and may reap huge profits from it.

So we're pretty sure that without serious pressure the Keystone Pipeline will get its permit from Washington. A wonderful coalition of environmental groups has built a strong campaign across the continent—from Cree and Dene indigenous leaders to Nebraska farmers, they've spoken out strongly against the destruction of their land. We need to join them, and to say even if our own homes won't be crossed by this pipeline, our joint home—the earth—will be wrecked by the carbon that pours down it.

And we need to say something else, too: it's time to stop letting corporate power make the most important decisions our planet faces.

We don't have the money to compete with those corporations, but we do have our bodies, and beginning in mid August many of us will use them. We will, each day through Labor Day, march on the White House, risking arrest with our trespass. We will do it in dignified fashion, demonstrating that in this case we are the conservatives, and that our foes—who would change the composition of the atmosphere are dangerous radicals. Come dressed as if for a business meeting—this is, in fact, serious business. And another sartorial tip—if you wore an Obama button during the 2008 campaign, why not wear it again? We very much still want to believe in the promise of that young Senator who told us that with his election the ‘rise of the oceans would begin to slow and the planet start to heal.’ We don't understand what combination of bureaucratic obstinacy and insider dealing has derailed those efforts, but we remember his request that his supporters continue on after the election to pressure the government for change. We'll do what we can.

And one more thing: we don't want college kids to be the only cannon fodder in this fight. They've led the way so far on climate change—10,000 came to DC for the Powershift gathering earlier this spring. They've marched this month in West Virginia to protest mountaintop removal; Tim DeChristopher faces sentencing this summer in Utah for his creative protest. Now it's time for people who've spent their lives pouring carbon into the atmosphere (and whose careers won't be as damaged by an arrest record) to step up too. Most of us signing this letter are veterans of this work, and we think it's past time for elders to behave like elders. One thing we don't want is a smash up: if you can't control your passions, this action is not for you.

This won't be a one-shot day of action. We plan for it to continue for several weeks, to the date in September when by law the administration can either grant or deny the permit for the pipeline. Not all of us can actually get arrested—half the signatories to this letter live in Canada, and might well find our entry into the U.S. barred. But we will be making plans for

sympathy demonstrations outside Canadian consulates in the U.S., and U.S. consulates in Canada—the decision-makers need to know they're being watched.

Winning this battle won't save the climate. But losing it will mean the chances of runaway climate change go way up—that we'll endure an endless future of the floods and droughts we've seen this year. And we're fighting for the political future too—for the premise that we should make decisions based on science and reason, not political connection. You have to start somewhere, and this is where we choose to begin.

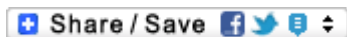
If you think you might want to be a part of this action, we need you to sign up here. As plans solidify in the next few weeks we'll be in touch with you to arrange nonviolence training; our colleagues at a variety of environmental and democracy campaigns will be coordinating the actual arrangements.

We know we're asking a lot. You should think long and hard on it, and pray if you're the praying type. But to us, it's as much privilege as burden to get to join this fight in the most serious possible way. We hope you'll join us.

Maude Barlow
Wendell Berry
Tom Goldtooth
Danny Glover
James Hansen
Wes Jackson
Naomi Klein
Bill McKibben
George Poitras
David Suzuki
Gus Speth

p.s.—Please pass this letter on to anyone else you think might be interested. We realize that what we're asking isn't easy, and we're very grateful that you're willing even to consider it.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:51 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Wednesday, June 22, 2011

[Eleanor J. Bader: Black Panther's Posthumous Writings Cover Activism's Risks, Rewards](#)

Black Panther's Posthumous Writings Cover Activism's Risks, Rewards

by Eleanor J. Bader [article link](#)

June 22, 2011 | Truthout | Book Review

"The War Before: The True Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison & Fighting for Those Left Behind" [Safiya Bukhari Feminist Press New York, 2010](#)

Everyone wants to leave a legacy, whether through procreation or by creating a tangible testament to their existence. For some, it's art, music, storytelling or writing. For others it's the founding of an organization or the creation of a product.

For Black Panther Safiya Bukhari, who died in 2003, the bequest included an ongoing community organization, the Jericho Movement to free US political prisoners; a daughter and grandchild; and an astute collection of essays written to encourage the always-uphill battle to win freedom and equality for the world's disenfranchised and impoverished people.

In "The War Before," a collection of 22 edited commentaries, Bukhari gives readers a sense of what it was like to be a Panther and captures the exhilaration of establishing free breakfast programs and health centers in low-income communities of color. She also explores Panther excesses, from rigid rules to over-the-top posturing and pontificating. At the same time, the anthology reminds would-be or burned-out activists of the sheer joy that comes from resisting civic wrongs.

It's an important, inspiring book.

That said, there are small lapses in which rhetoric dominates, and some topics - such as the split between East Coast and West Coast Panthers that was fomented by the US counterintelligence program, or Cointelpro - could have been more fully discussed.

Still, "The War Before" is a fascinating look at the making of an activist, and it captures the spirit of a tumultuous era in which thousands joined Bukhari in believing that a domestic insurrection was not just possible, but imminent.

Editor and former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn's introduction to the book gives readers a bit of the backstory. Among the tidbits presented are these: Bukhari - originally named Bernice Jones - was reared in the Bronx, one of ten children in a devoutly Christian, middle-class household. In college, she joined the Eta Alpha Mu sorority and, as part of her initiation, was required to travel to Harlem. There, she and several friends encountered a member of the Black Panther Party (BPP) selling newspapers, and learned of the feeding program that had been established. "The women went to the church where the breakfasts were offered, to see for themselves," Whitehorn reports. "Safiya liked what she saw and kept coming back. It was at that time that she began to notice how badly the community was treated by the police."

By early 1969, Jones/Bukhari was hooked. She dropped out of school and began working in the Harlem BPP office, immersing herself in the study of political theory and learning to do community organizing. She also got involved with comrade Robert Webb and gave birth to a daughter. "In those years," Whitehorn writes, "revolutionaries usually saw ourselves as too busy making revolution to engage in standard family life."

As the year progressed, the demands on the cadre became more intense, and after BPP members Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were murdered in December 1969 - killed by government agents hell-bent on destroying the BPP - many activists, including Bukhari, concluded that underground organizations were needed. Placing her daughter with her mother, Bukhari vanished. Whitehorn chronicles what happened next:

In December 1973, [Bukhari] was arrested and charged with plotting to break prisoners out of New York City jails.... The charges were soon dismissed. Then she was hit with a subpoena to testify before a grand jury that was preparing charges against other Black radicals. She couldn't bring herself to testify against her political associates. Safiya left her family and friends to continue her work underground. She stayed under for almost two years, until 1975, when she was arrested at the scene of a grocery store shooting in Norfolk, Virginia.

Bukhari was ultimately convicted and sentenced to 40 years. While imprisoned, her health began to deteriorate, but her requests for medical care were ignored. She somehow escaped from the prison in late 1976. Although she got the health care she needed while on the lam, she was eventually recaptured, and spent the next four years in solitary confinement. Finally, after eight years and eight months, she was granted parole and released in 1983.

Bukhari's attention subsequently turned to publicizing the existence of political prisoners here at home. She also worked to develop support networks for those locked inside. Her essays on this topic are searing.

So are her reflections on the BPP, written with the obvious benefit of hindsight. In "On The Question of Sexism Within the Black Panther Party," she places male chauvinism in a wider context. "The destruction of our culture, which started with the stealing of our language, religion, and children, was completed when we began to measure our own worth by how many women the Black man could pleasure at a time and how many children we could have," she writes. "Since Black men had been stripped of their manhood in every way but the ability to pleasure women and make babies, the sexual act soon

became the standard by which the Black man measured his manhood. This is the root of the sexism that is plaguing our community."

This is not to say that Bukhari condoned sexist behavior. She didn't. Among the Party's Eight Points of Attention, she continues, was the injunction that men should not "take liberties with women." That this was part of the written mandate impressed Bukhari, and she notes that BPP women often worked "right alongside men, being assigned sections to organize just like the men, and receiving the same training as men." Nonetheless, she recognized that many male Panthers "brought their sexist attitudes into the organization." Worse, she was highly aware of the fact that they were rarely, if ever, ordered to change their ways.

While Bukhari did not consider herself a feminist, the presumption of male superiority rankled her, and she fought it at every turn. Then again, her standards for everyone - male and female - were extremely high, and when people failed to meet her expectations she sought to understand the psychological and material factors that made it difficult for them to do so.

In "We Too Are Veterans: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Black Panther Party," she lambastes the government repression that not only left many Panthers dead, but also led to psychic trauma in those who survived. "We had not just mouthed the words 'revolution in our lifetime,' but had believed them," she confesses. "We sincerely believed the Black Panther Party would lead us to victory." Instead, activists like Clark and Hampton, Timothy "Red" Adams, Fred Bennett, Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, John Huggins, Little Bobby Hutton, Twymon Myers, Sandra Pratt, Robert Webb, and Anthony "Kimu" White were murdered. This reality, in addition to "the constant shoot-outs, the infiltration and set-ups that left you leery of strangers or of anyone getting too close or acting too friendly," took a terrible toll on the BPP members left to bear witness, Bukhari concludes.

"As I looked over the list of PTSD symptoms, I recognized myself," she writes. "And the first step in resolving the problem is recognizing that it exists."

Indeed. To her credit, Bukhari refused to wallow in bitterness and chose to focus her energies on the self-help that comes from fighting back. As the founder of the Jericho Movement, a coalition of religious and secular groups working to win amnesty for US political prisoners, Bukhari worked tirelessly to plan rallies, protests and speaking tours before her untimely death.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's touching afterword posits Bukhari as someone who never lost sight of the big picture. She knew, he writes, that "it comes down to organizing. It comes down to the people."

The Bukhari that Abu-Jamal recalls knew that the movement was bigger than any one person, but still understood that one person could get the ball rolling and make an impact. Those who knew her, he adds, frequently commented that she was the hardest-working person they'd ever met.

"The War Before" will remind Bukhari's friends and family of what the planet lost when Safiya died eight years ago at age 53. Likewise, it is sure to stir those who are reading her words for the first time.

Safiya Bukhari, presente.

Eleanor J. Bader is a freelance writer, teacher and feminist activist from Brooklyn, New York. She writes for [The Brooklyn Rail](#), [ontheissuesmagazine.com](#), [RHrealitycheck.org](#) and other progressive blogs and publications.

Truthout [home page](#)

Safiya Bukhari [Feminist Press New York, 2010](#)

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Tuesday, June 21, 2011

Shamus Cooke: The Super Rich Sabotage The Arab Revolutions

The Super Rich Sabotage The Arab Revolutions

by Shamus Cooke [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 20, 2011 | Countercurrents | Global Research

With revolutions sweeping the Arab world and bubbling-up across Europe, aging tyrants or discredited governments are doing their best to cling to power. It's hard to over-exaggerate the importance of these events: the global political and economic status-quo is in deep crisis. If pro-democracy or anti-austerity movements emerge victorious, they'll have an immediate problem to solve -- how to pay for their vision of a better world. The experiences thus far in Egypt and Greece are proof enough that money matters. The wealthy nations holding the purse strings are still able to influence the unfolding of events from afar, subjecting humiliating conditions on those countries undergoing profound social change.

This strategy is being ruthlessly deployed in the Arab world. Take for example Egypt, where the U.S. and Europe are quietly supporting the military dictatorship that replaced the dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak. Now Mubarak's generals rule the country. The people of Egypt, however, still want real change, not a mere shuffling at the top; a strike wave and mass demonstrations are testing the power of the new military dictatorship.

A strike wave implies that Egyptians want better wages and working conditions; and economic opportunity was one of the central demands of the revolutionaries who toppled Mubarak. But revolutions tend to have a temporarily negative effect on a nation's economy. This is mainly because those who dominate the economy, the rich, do their best to sabotage any social change.

One defining feature of revolutions is the exodus of the rich, who correctly assume their wealth will be targeted for redistribution. This is often referred to as "capital flight." Also, rich foreign investors stop investing money in the revolutionary country, not knowing if the company they're investing in will remain privately owned, or if the government they're investing in will strategically default and choose not to pay back foreign investors. Lastly, workers demand higher wages in revolutions, and many owners would rather shut down -- if they don't flee -- than operate for small profits. All of this hurts the economy overall.

The New York Times reports:

"The 18-day [Egyptian] revolt stopped new foreign investment and decimated the pivotal tourist industry... The revolution has inspired new demands for more jobs and higher wages that are fast colliding with the economy's diminished capacity... Strikes by workers demanding their share of the revolution's spoils continue to snarl industry... The main sources of capital in this country have either been arrested, escaped or are too afraid to engage in any business..." (June 10, 2011).

Understanding this dynamic, the rich G8 nations are doing their best to exploit it. Knowing that any governments that emerge from the Arab revolutions will be instantly cash-starved, the G8 is dangling \$20 billion with strings attached. The strings in this case are demands that the Arab countries pursue only "open market" policies, i.e., business-friendly reforms, such as privatizations, elimination of food and gas subsidies, and allowing foreign banks and corporations better access to the economy. A separate New York Times article addressed the subject with the misleading title, Aid Pledge by Group of 8 Seeks to Bolster Arab Democracy:

"Democracy, the [G8] leaders said, could be rooted only in economic reforms that *created open markets* ... The [\$20 billion] pledge, an aide to President Obama said, was "not a blank check" but "an envelope that could be achieved in the context of suitable [economic] reform efforts." (May 28, 2011).

The G8 policy towards the Arab world is thus the same policy the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have pursued against weaker nations that have run into economic problems. The cure is always worse than the disease, since "open market" reforms always lead to the national wealth being siphoned into the hands of fewer and fewer people as

public entities are privatized, making the rich even richer, while social services are eliminated, making the poor even poorer. Also, the open door to foreign investors evolves into a speculative bubble that inevitably bursts; the investors flee an economically devastated country. It is no accident that many former IMF "beneficiary" countries have paid off their debts and denounced their benefactors, swearing never to return.

Nations that refuse the conditions imposed by the G8 or IMF are thus cut off from the capital that any country would need to maintain itself and expand amid a time of social change. The rich nations proclaim victory in both instances: either the poorer nation asks for help and becomes economically penetrated by western corporations, or the poor country is economically and politically isolated, punished and used as an example of what becomes of those countries that attempt a non-capitalist route to development.

Many Arab countries are especially appetizing to foreign corporations hungry for new investments, since large state-run industries remain in place to help the working-class populations, a tradition begun under the socialist-inspired Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser that spread across the Arab world. If Egypt falls victim to an Iraq-like privatization frenzy, Egypt's working people and poor will pay higher prices for food, gas, and other basic necessities. This is one reason, other than oil, that many U.S. corporations would also like to invade Iran.

The social turmoil in the Arab world and Europe have fully exposed the domination that wealthy investors and corporations have over the politics of nations. All over Europe "bailouts" are being discussed for poorer nations facing economic crises. The terms of these bailout loans are ruthless and are dictated by nothing more than the desire to maximize profits. In Greece, for example, the profit-motive of the lenders is obvious to everyone, helping to create a social movement that might reach Arab proportions. The New York Times reports:

"The new [Greece bailout] loans, however, will only be forthcoming if more austerity measures are introduced...Along with faster progress on privatization, Europe and the [IMF] fund have been demanding that Greece finally begin cutting public sector jobs and closing down unprofitable entities." (June 1, 2011).

This same phenomenon is happening all over Europe, from England to Spain, as working people are told that social programs must be slashed, public jobs eliminated, and state industries privatized. The U.S. is also deeply affected, with daily media threats about the "vigilante bond holders" [rich investors] who will stop buying U.S. debt if Social Security, Medicare, and other social services are not eliminated.

Never before has the global market economy been so damningly exposed as biased and dominated by the super-wealthy. These consciousness-raising experiences cannot be easily siphoned into politicians promising "democracy," since democracy is precisely the problem: a tiny minority of super-rich individuals have dictatorial power due to their enormous wealth, which they use to threaten governments who don't cater to their every whim. Money is thus given to subservient governments and taken away from independent ones, while the western media never questions these often sudden shifts in policy, which can instantly transform a longtime U.S. ally into a "dictator" or vice-versa.

The toppling of dictators in the Arab world has immediately raised the question of, "What next"? The economic demands of working people cannot be satisfied while giant corporations dominate the economy, since higher wages mean lower corporate profits, while better social services require that the rich pay higher taxes. These fundamental conflicts lay just beneath the social upheavals all over the world, which came into maturity with the global recession and will continue to dominate social life for years to come. The outcome of this prolonged struggle will determine what type of society emerges from the political tumult, and will meet either the demands of working people or serve the needs of rich investors and giant corporations.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action (www.workerscompass.org). He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com

1) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/10/world/middleeast/10egypt.html?_r=1&hpw

2) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/28/world/europe/28g8.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&sq=g8%20arab&st=cse&scp=1

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European Spring: The Gradual Demise Of Capitalism

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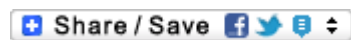
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by Staff Report [article link](#)

June 21, 2011 | Daily Bell

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Monday, June 20, 2011

Robert Kuttner: If Only Greece Were AIG

The struggling country hasn't been bailed out because it's not a bank—it's just a country with suffering people.

If Only Greece Were AIG

by Robert Kuttner [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 20, 2011 | CommonDreams | The American Prospect

Here comes Financial Crisis 2.0. Like its predecessor, it was caused by the banks.

The first crisis was the result of banks inventing toxic financial products and then promoting bets on different kinds of securities with borrowed money. When the speculative bubble popped, tens of trillions of dollars in financial and housing assets vanished. At that point, governments and central banks stepped in and rescued the banks. The only thing that suffered was the rest of the economy.

On all policy fronts, banks called the shots. The supposed cure for the large public deficits caused by the financial crisis and resulting recession was belt tightening—for everyone but the banks. Yet voters were oddly passive because the issues seemed technical, elected leaders sided with bankers, and citizens were not quite sure whom to blame.

Now, the worm is turning. Austerity itself is creating a second crisis, and this time it has some political bite.

The epicenter of the new crisis is Greece, which epitomizes the folly of banker rule.

Greece has large public deficits, partly caused by bad accounting and tax evasion, but mostly by the recession itself. It's obvious that Greece cannot afford to pay its current debts, so money markets expect a default. As speculative global markets decide Greece's fate, the cost of Greek government borrowing has been pushed up to nearly 30 percent.

The world's finance ministries and central banks, which sprang into action when AIG or Citibank needed help, are not rescuing Greece. After all, Greece is only a country with suffering citizens. AIG is a corporation! Citi is a bank!

Instead, the European authorities and the International Monetary Fund have pressed the Greeks to pursue more and more painful austerity policies as a condition for any relief. But austerity doesn't work: As belt tightening pushes Greece deeper and deeper into depression, markets lose even more confidence in its capacity to pay its debts.

There is an easy solution, one similar to the restructuring of Latin American and other third world debts nearly two decades ago: Trade Greek short-term debt for longer-term debt. In addition, give Greece some debt relief at the expense of its bondholders, who are mainly the European Central Bank (ECB) and various commercial banks. When Latin American debt was restructured, bondholders lost about 30 cents on the dollar, but Latin countries were freed to resume growth.

This solution has been off the table because of the political power of creditors. The European Central Bank in particular has acted as the agent of Greece's creditors, and without ECB support, no restructuring of Greek debt is possible. Even the German finance ministry—not exactly a hotbed of profligacy—has been pressing for bondholders to share in the losses so that restructuring can go forward. But their effort has been stymied by the bankers.

This impasse is made worse by the prevalence of one of the toxic products that caused Crisis 1.0, credit default swaps (CDS), which are thinly capitalized insurance policies against a default. There is huge resistance from financiers to a Greek restructuring, not just because bondholders would lose money, but because it would also trigger payments required by CDS contracts, causing other speculators to take a bath.

Now, however, citizens are finally waking up and pushing back. The Greek government, led by a very talented and competent Socialist, George Papandreou, has been unable to get his own caucus to approve the latest austerity budget. Financial markets are beginning to grasp that either a default or a restructuring is inevitable, which means that bankers will have to take some losses.

And though Greece is the epicenter, popular backlash against banker rule and austerity policies is growing across Europe. Reporting for The New York Times from Athens, correspondent Rachel Donadio writes: "Across Europe, people are complaining that they are unfairly paying the price for the mistakes of their governments while they are growing increasingly resentful of the international banks and the preferential treatment they seem to receive. And they are getting louder."

There is still time to for the world's leaders to reverse course before the latest fruit of banker rule turns into another full-fledged financial panic. When the casualties were banks, the Fed and the European Central Banks didn't dither; they raced to help them, partly because banks had so much political clout, partly for fear of broader spillovers.

Now it is dawning on officials at these institutions that letting a small country collapse can have a similar effect—imagine that.

The world's central banks and governments need to fashion a restructuring plan for Greece—and fast. They need to create some backup support for the financial system to stem any panic. More broadly, the world's policy makers need to reverse their embrace of the austerity cure for the fallout from the last financial collapse.

As always, such reversals only come via a rekindling of popular politics. It took three agonizing years, but popular consciousness about who caused the crisis and who is needlessly prolonging it is finally coming back to life.

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Robert Kuttner is co-founder and co-editor of [The American Prospect](#) magazine, as well as a Distinguished Senior Fellow of the think tank [Demos](#). He was a longtime columnist for Business Week, and continues to write columns in the Boston Globe and Huffington Post. He is the author of [A Presidency in Peril: The Inside Story of Obama's Promise, Wall Street's Power, and the Struggle to Control our Economic Future](#), [Obama's Challenge](#), and other books.

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Saturday, June 18, 2011

[Ralph Nader: Waging Another Unconstitutional War](#)

Waging Another Unconstitutional War

by Ralph Nader [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 18, 2011 | CommonDreams | Nader

The meticulous Harvard Law Review editors should be rolling over in their footnotes. The recidivist violations of constitutional and statutory requirements by their celebrated predecessor at that journal – Barack Obama has reached Orwellian dimensions in the war against Libya.

You see, the widespread daily bombing of Libya, the strict naval blockade of Muammar Gadhafi-controlled Libya, the destruction of Gadhafi's family compound and tent encampment in the desert--killing his son and three grandchildren--and the deployment of special forces inside Libya is not a "War." It is in the Obama White House's evasive nomenclature just a "time-limited, scope-limited military action" Can you find that phrase in the Constitution?

If Obama used the word "War," he would have a more difficult time explaining to Congress and the American people (three out of four oppose this war) why he did not (1) seek a declaration of war under Article I, section 8, clause 11 of the Constitution, or (2) seek Congressional authorization for appropriated funds to further the war with our NATO co-warriors, or (3) comply with the deadlines of the War Powers Resolution. He threw all three lawful restraints on his Presidential unilateralism overboard.

So, in the invidious tradition of George W. Bush and his indentured confessor, Justice Department lawyer, John Yoo, now comfortably ensconced on the law faculty of the University of California Berkeley, Mr. Obama is blithely claiming as authority for taking our country into another war "the inherent powers of the President under Article II of the Constitution." This wouldn't pass the laugh test by Jefferson, Madison, Franklin Mason or even Hamilton. James Madison believed placing the war-declaring power in the exclusive hands of Congress was the most significant achievement during the convention in Philadelphia that summer of 1787. No more King George substitutes for America's future, they demanded.

Note that Libya did not attack the U.S. or its appendages, and did not attack a member of NATO. Obama admits these points. Libya's trusting government sovereign fund even left \$37 billion in the U.S. which Obama promptly froze. Lacking even the prevaricatory pretenses for Bush's illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003, Obama and Hillary Clinton now say the U.S. is militarily involved "to protect our interests and advance our values" in the region and, of course, to protect the "universal rights" of the Libyan people. (Opportunities abound for this Obama doctrine around the world from the Congo to Syria, to Burma, to occupied Palestine and many other areas.)

Desperately seeking legitimacy, Mr. Obama cites the UN resolution, NATO, and the Arab League instead of seeking it from Congress. For all treaties with foreign countries, including the UN Charter, are trumped by the U.S. Constitution (Reid v. Covert, 354 U.S. 1 (1957)). As a former teacher of constitutional law, the President knows this basic principle but then, as Lord Acton declared: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Congress, rendered a rubber stamp by President George W. Bush, is bestirring itself. On June 3, 2011, the House of Representatives passed H.R. Res 292 declaring that the President shall not deploy, establish, or maintain the presence of units and members of the United States Armed Forces on the ground in Libya. On this matter, Obama pleads state secrets.

On June 16, 2011, ten members of the House – five conservative Republicans (including Walter B. Jones (Rep. N.C.) and Ron Paul (Rep. Texas) and five Democrats (including Dennis Kucinich (Dem. Ohio) and John Conyers (Dem. Mich.) filed suit against President Obama in federal district court for an order declaring the U.S. war in Libya "without a declaration of

Congress with the use of funds never approved for such a war" to be unconstitutional. Given past judicial decisions declaring members of Congress to have "no standing to sue" on what they call "political matters," this suit is facing an uphill barrier.

Congress has appropriated no money for this war, already costing nearly a billion dollars, nor has the lawless Obama asked for it because he knows there will be strong bi-partisan resistance.

So where is the Congress to go but to the courts to decide this internal, domestic issue affecting the separation of powers provoked by a clearly lawless President? The degraded, politicized, formerly professional, Office of Legal Counsel is a sleazy apologist for presidential overreaching for over two decades.

The expanding immunities of the Executive branch, now increasingly embracing the military contractors of the corporate state, is destroying the remaining pretensions that we are a nation under law. When he was inaugurated as President in January 2009, President Obama said he wanted his Administration to be known as one of "transparency and the rule of law." You'll recall during his 2008 campaign he trumpeted that he would obey the Constitution, inferring the the Republican regime was trampling the Rule of Law.

Indeed in 2007, then Senator Barack Obama stated that "the president does not have any power under the Constitution to unilaterally authorize a military attack in a situation that does not involve stopping an actual or imminent threat to the nation." Vice President Biden was even more vehement on this issue. And Secretary of Defense Robert Gates originally opposed the attack on Libya before falling in line.

Gadhafi's dictatorship is a brutal one. Civil wars are brutal. People are dying and suffering. The country is being torn apart. Obama and NATO are not adequately testing offers for a truce and supervised elections. Top level officials are defecting from Gadhafi and hoping to help lead any successor government.

Regimes brutalize their people whether as dictatorships, authoritarian rulers, connected with dominant oligarchies, or through racial, religious or other sectarian repressions. Is the U.S., mired in deep recession, debt and its own kleptocracy, going to continue to police the world with bases, interventions, subversions or occupation?

The cause of human rights everywhere, needs a permanent, well-quipped professional United Nations peace-keeping force and effective international courts to prevent mass massacres and mass brutalities. That time is not near but it should be at the top of the agenda of civilized nations.

The U.S., as the number one military superpower, provoking antagonisms by its penchant for control throughout the world, should not imperially advance our empire. It is that belief which is bringing Right and Left together, not just in Congress, but around the country.

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His most recent book - and first novel - is, [Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us](#). His most recent work of non-fiction is [The Seventeen Traditions](#).

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Saturday, June 18, 2011

Pablo Ouziel: Should Wealth Be Held by the Few or Everyone?

Should Wealth Be Held by the Few or Everyone?

That's the Central Focus of Protests from Spain to Greece

By Pablo Ouziel [article link](#)

June 16, 2011 | AlterNet

What started in Spain is now clearly spreading across Europe, where we have witnessed social movements making similar demands for economic democracy.

While “Europe’s slow-motion financial collapse” – as Mother Jones magazine described it in a June 6 article – continues apace, Spain, like other European states continues to implement anti-social/neo-liberal policies in the face of strong opposition from the citizenry.

It has been one month since Spain’s “Indignados” (Indignant Ones) movement non-violently claimed 60 city-squares across the country, calling for economic democracy, political justice and peace.

Since then, much has happened within Spanish borders, and what is happening there is clearly spreading across Europe, where we have witnessed social movements making similar demands.

We have observed the rise of a parallel movement in Portugal where most city squares have also been camped on by “Indignados” and where only hours before the country’s general elections protesters in Lisbon were attacked and beaten by police.

We have witnessed how on that same night, in Athens, Greece, 80,000 protesters congregated in the city’s main square in opposition to the country’s “austerity measures,” waving banners in solidarity with the “Indignados” of Spain and of other European countries.

In Paris, we have seen the Bastille taken non-violently by French “Indignados” only to be quickly reclaimed by the country’s police force.

Wherever you look in Europe, you hear the same cries of indignation. In some countries with more intensity than others, but the cry is becoming louder everywhere, and what may seem like a slow-motion financial collapse is rapidly becoming an accelerated social catastrophe.

Specifically in Spain, despite the political elite depicting a country recovering from the financial collapse, everyday things are getting worse economically, politically and socially.

Protests, although nonviolent for the most part, could be on the verge of becoming violent unless the political and economic elites begin to make some concessions.

On the economic front, Spain began the month of June with comments from the European Commission about the potential that the country will miss its economic growth and budget-deficit targets for the year. The commission’s recommendation was more economic “reform.”

Then a report from the ratings agency Moody’s pointed out that the high Catalan deficit was affecting the solvency of the whole of Spain.

A few days later, in the region of Castilla-La Mancha, the incoming administration of the rightwing Popular Party (PP), before even taking office, proclaimed that the region was “totally bankrupt.”

Then, the National Statistics Institute revealed that Spain’s property sales in April had been the lowest since the institute began reporting in 2007.

Obviously, this stream of negative news, coupled with discussions taking place in Europe regarding a potential debt default by Greece, affected Spain’s bond sales and moved the country one step closer to a bailout, or a default followed by its subsequent debt restructuring.

On the political front, June has been equally intense. The government has approved by decree changes in collective bargaining agreements after failed negotiations with the two major trade unions in the country.

The government also approved the extension indefinitely of the Spanish military mission in Libya and announced the creation of a new NATO operations center to control Spanish airspace and help missions coordinated from Southern Europe.

On the social front, as of the first of June, the government warned that the “Indignados” could not remain camped on city squares much longer.

Spain’s Prime Minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, addressed the request from the “Indignados” for electoral reform by telling them the changes could only be possible through consensus from all political parties, a way to respond without complying.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair visited Spain with the advice that “demonstrators should be heard but not allowed to govern.”

Yet, according to a survey published by the newspaper El Pais, there exists wide support (81 percent) for the movement among the Spanish population.

Among the supporters are public intellectuals, such as Vicent Navarro, Arcadi Oliveras and Eduardo Galeano, along with political figures such as Santiago Carrillo, who was the secretary general of the Spanish Communist Party and a key voice during the country’s transition to democracy, and Cayo Lara, the coordinator for the third largest political party in Spain, Izquierda Unida.

Even Rosalía Mera, who is Spain’s richest woman according to Forbes Magazine, has expressed public support for the “Indignados.”

Reacting to recent events, commissions of the “Indignados” from across the country met in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol Square to discuss the movement’s future.

Through a process of popular assembly, they agreed to three key actions:

First, to boycott the country’s Town Halls as the new governments were sworn in following the recent regional and local elections; second, to abandon city squares and move their social action into city neighborhoods in an attempt to broaden the movement’s involvement with the rest of the citizenry; and third, to continue organizing protests on specific dates focused on particular issues, including a firm commitment to a global protest of “Indignados” on Oct. 15.

The first nationwide coordinated initiative since the spontaneous movement mushroomed on May 15, the boycott of Town Halls, was well represented by “Indignados” across Spain.

Demonstrators blocked entrances to Town Halls, climbed onto the balconies, prevented official cars from exiting car parks, disturbed investiture sessions with speeches, and followed politicians across cities as they celebrated their victories, shouting to them, “shame on you!”

Artur Mas, president of the Generalitat (the government of the Catalan autonomous region), was forced to arrive at parliament in a police helicopter, as thousands of “Indignados” blocked the entrance in an attempt to stop the region’s budget approval.

The protesters shouted: “You do not represent us!” The parliamentary session began with only half of the representatives able to enter the building.

In Valencia, the police charged at demonstrators injuring 12 and arresting five. To avoid further protests in that city, where the new government has ten of its members including its president facing corruption charges, Spain’s vice president, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, canceled a planned trip.

In the city of Madrid, police batons struck protesters. In Salamanca, five “Indignados” were injured. In Burgos, two were arrested. In Castellón, the protesters were violently dispersed as they were in Vigo and in Santiago de Compostela.

Following the arrests across the country, spontaneous demonstrations followed in front of police headquarters demanding the prompt release of those detained. Most protesters were released on bail.

It seems clear, when one takes an in-depth look at events unfolding in Spain, that these protests have hit a nerve throughout Spanish society, despite the fact that the movement is practicing a form of nonviolent direct democracy which is not familiar to most Spaniards, nor for that matter to most citizens in Western-style democracies.

Spain’s political, social and economic climate is beginning to be shaped, at least partially, by these cries of indignation.

Nevertheless, there is a danger that unless economic and political elites begin to listen and engage in some serious dialogue with the “Indignados” – instead of sending out the police to attack them – the nonviolence could quickly turn to violence.

Spain’s nonviolent protesters are not Gandhi’s well-trained and disciplined nonviolent peacemakers with months of rigorous training in Gandhian Ashrams. This is a one-month-old spontaneous and diverse movement, which is only now beginning to organize and present specific demands.

Whether the “Indignados” will turn violent if the police continue to beat them – or whether the country’s elites will begin addressing the popular demands rising from the streets – we will learn only as events unfold.

Pablo Ouziel is an activist and a freelance writer based in Spain. His articles and essays are available at pabloouziel.com

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Spain’s ‘Indignant Ones’

by Pablo Ouziel [article link](#)

June 15, 2011 | MMresearch

How Spain Launched a Revolution

by Ter Garcia [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 18, 2011 | CommonDreams | Waging Nonviolence

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Friday, June 17, 2011

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[Dave Zirin: Understanding Vancouver's 'Hockey Riot'](#)

Understanding Vancouver's 'Hockey Riot'

by Dave Zirin [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 17, 2011 | CommonDreams | The Nation

How do we understand [the riots that exploded](#) in Vancouver after the beloved Canucks lost the Stanley Cup Finals? How do we understand the burning cars, broken glass and injuries that stand as an enduring coda of their game seven defeat at the hands of the visiting Boston Bruins? Having communicated with several dozen people in “the most livable city in the world,” I think I have a modest perspective on why the Canucks’ 4-0 loss was followed by fire.

One thing was made abundantly clear to me, Please disregard the “analysis” of TSN’s Bob McKenzie a k a “The Hockey Insider” [who blamed](#) “left wing loons” for the rubble. Mackenzie tweeted that he was sure responsibility lay with “anarchists and some organized extremists...many of the same people and groups who orchestrated riots in Toronto last summer at the G8.” This is unsupported and profoundly irresponsible garbage with no basis in fact. Vancouver activist Harsha Walia said to me, “It’s ridiculous that even a hockey riot needs a scapegoat. A deliberately created media circus of sports fervor, millions of alcohol advertising dollars and City-sanctioned street party zones all over downtown will unsurprisingly lead to a massive street brawl.

Let’s also dispense with the fiction that this was the fault of all “Canuck fans.” The fans on the whole were actually in fine form after the game. They gave Conn Smythe winner, Bruin goalie Tim Thomas, a standing ovation and also rose and cheered for every Bruin from Vancouver British Columbia. Of the millions of Canuck supporters, this was a minuscule mob. As Shiema Ali of Vancouver wrote to me, “I live in Vancouver and left the downtown core just before the game started. There were tons of people coming into the city who were already drunk and rowdy (in a bad way)—win or lose those people were ready to riot.”

What happened after the game was neither in the spirit of people at the arena not the spirit of those who bravely protested the G8. As activist and hockey fan Derrick O’Keefe said to me, “Sometimes a riot is the ‘language of the unheard,’ in the

words of Martin Luther King Jr. But sometimes a riot is just an expression of young male stupidity and violence—this was the case last night in Vancouver.”

Another person said to me, “There were lots of [LGBTQ people] down there, some got roughed up, some dental care needed. There are also attempts to pin this on ‘black bloc’ and references to ‘protesters.’ There are lots of frustrated young men for sure lashing out at authority but no analysis of what might be spurring this.”

I did receive this incisive bit of analysis from Dru Oja Day, an editor at the [Media Co-op](#). “If you ask people to pour all of their emotions and anger into a game, then a major event (Montrealers have rioted after first round game 7 wins!) is going to occasion some outbursts. Hockey commentators like Hockey Nights’ Don Cherry are constantly associating hockey with the troops overseas (he went to Afghanistan and fired a live shell, for chrissakes) and promote fighting and big open ice hits. We shouldn’t be surprised.”

John Ward-Leighton also [pointed out on his blog](#) the role that the liquor lobby played in turned an entire area around the arena into a branded “Entertainment Zone” larded with bars and free-flowing liquor.

“It was clear that a lot of of the participants in last night’s riot and looting were at the very least impaired and looking for trouble,” said Ward-Leighton. “This ‘zone’ has nothing to do with entertainment and much to do with the almost criminal profit taking of the proprietors of the establishments who far from ‘serving it right’ pour drunken idiots into the streets nightly to brawl and drive drunk.... The fault for last night’s idiocy was not about losing a hockey game or the police response, the bomb had its fuse lit with the myth that the only way you can have fun is to get stinking drunk.”

And yet the action—or inaction of the police is garnering attention as well. Alex Kerner, a law student and activist said to me, “How the police dealt with this riot compared to the G20 in Toronto last summer is instructive. While the destruction of police cars, property and lighting of fires was much more extensive this time, the police tended to focus only on those who committed the acts of vandalism. Some tear gas was used, but for the most part the targets were the actual rioters. Contrast this to the G20, where police used much more limited property damage by anarchists during the protests to sweep through the entire protest and arrest a record number of participants, irrespective of their actions. This sends a pretty sharp message from police that being around a pointless hockey riot is much safer than being at a protest with an actual purpose.”

It’s also worth noting that of the dozens of people who have needed medical attention, the overwhelming majority have required treatment for “exposure to tear gas or pepper spray” from, of course, the police. In addition, the push from police and the media for people to “post on Facebook” pictures of rioters so they can be identified and prosecuted signifies some kind of queasy step toward “social media as police state” that we should reject. Today a sports riot, tomorrow a demonstration.

One aspect that’s not getting nearly the publicity as the riots themselves are the people who risked danger, going in the street doing volunteer cleanup, while the streets still raged. As O’Keefe said to me, “Here in Canada, we’re dealing with a federal government hell bent on cutting back public services—they’re about to legislate postal workers back to work—but these are exactly the working people who tended to the wounded and put out the fires that night. In a way, we could thank the testosterone-laden morons for reminding a hockey crazed city that the real heroes in society don’t play a game for money; the real heroes fight fires, drive ambulances, treat the sick and clean up garbage.” The real heroes are also those who try to connect with the angst and alienation that leads to such destruction and channels it into protesting the very people “hell bent on cutting back” the services we so dearly need.

As one of those real heroes, Harsha Walia said to me, “There is a sense that people rioted over a ‘stupid apolitical hockey game.’ While I too wish people were motivated by social justice issues, the hockey game is not apolitical by any means. The riots were a fundamentalist defense of a type of nationalism, most evident in the beatings of Bruins fans in Vancouver last night. NHL hockey is not simply a game, it is representative of obedience to consumerism and is part of the state’s attempt to forge a false identity—despite vast differences and inequalities across race, class and gender, through the spectacle of sport.”

The state does reap what the state sows. We should remember that as the hand-wringing by police and government officials commences in the wake of Vancouver's Great Hockey Riot.

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Dave Zirin is the author of [Welcome to the Terrordome: the Pain Politics and Promise of Sports](#) (Haymarket) and the newly published [A People's History of Sports in the United States](#) (The New Press). and his writing has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, Sports Illustrated.com, New York Newsday and The Progressive. He is the host of XM Radio's Edge of Sports Radio. Contact him at edgeofsports@gmail.com

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Thursday, June 16, 2011

[**Michael Payne: America: Once the Most Respected Nation in the World; What Happened?**](#)

America: Once the Most Respected Nation in the World; What Happened?

by Michael Payne [article link](#)

June 15, 2011 | OpEdNews

What happened? Well, that's really not difficult to explain. America once was the most respected, and admired, nation in the world. But then, suddenly, things began to change quite radically and, over a period of several decades, America went from being the most respected nation in the world to the most feared. Going from the most respected to the most feared is quite a feat, so how did such a transformation evolve?

We might call what happened to America "the good cop, bad cop" syndrome. After World War II, the U.S. was highly respected and thought of as that good cop that had led the efforts to defeat the primary Axis powers of Germany and Japan. After that war, it had, more or less, assumed the role of protector of the world.

America is no longer viewed as a protector of the world but, rather, a mighty military force that is protecting its own national interests. Quite a reversal of roles, is it not? The skies are full of our air power; the seas teeming with our fleets; and a large part of the world is garrisoned with our military installations and troops. The America of today is largely being viewed as the bad cop after its invasions and occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan over the past decade.

If I had to come up with one word to describe the dramatic change that has come over America during the last half of the 20th century and thus far in the 21st, it would be - rampant *Militarism*. It's as if an obsessive-compulsive behavioral disorder had entered the body of America, one that is totally resistant to any known treatment. It's a condition that is not improving over time but is continuing to grow with ever more intensity.

But let's get back to determining why America has largely lost the respect of the world. When did all this unrestrained militarism really take shape? We could say it began when, in 1950, U.S. forces were deployed in South Korea to help that nation fend off the threats of invasion by North Korea's armies. The stated reason for our involvement in that war that ended in 1953 was, supposedly, to stop the spread of communism. So let's call that the beginning.

However, I believe that the large growth of U.S. militarism began after several hundred thousand of our troops were deployed in Vietnam, beginning in 1965 during the era of the Cold War. That horrific military conflict lasted until the U.S. was forced to exit that country in 1975, but not before we had lost the astounding number of 58,000 troops and more than 2

million Vietnamese had been killed. During that war the U.S. used napalm, white phosphorus, and Agent Orange toxic chemicals to subdue the enemy and that country; it didn't work.

That was the point, in my estimation, at which the respect for America among the nations of the world began to erode. Sure there was a communist threat during that era, and it certainly had to be addressed, but the question was -- did it necessitate such a massive, long war to deal with the threat, or was it one of the greatest military blunders in history? We will let historians make that judgment, but this we know: from that time on the U.S. went on to involve itself in a succession of military conflicts against supposed enemies, mostly in very small nations, all over the world. And, unfortunately, the trend continues to this day.

If Korea was the beginning of our militaristic machine, and Vietnam greatly escalated its scope, then the terrorist attack on 9/11 can be considered as the event that capped the entire process and locked America into its current agenda of perpetual war.

Our government always needs some kind of bogeymen in order to justify its wars; during World War II the bogeymen were Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo -- and, yes, they were that and a whole lot more. More recently it was Saddam Hussein, then Osama Bin Laden, and now it's Libya's Gadhafi. Which country and which designated bogeyman within it will be the next target? Stay tuned because it could be Yemen, Syria, Iran or any nation in the Middle East, Central Asia or who knows where.

Currently the U.S. and NATO have about 150,000 troops caught up in a large quagmire in Afghanistan and Pakistan while, at the same time, the U.S. is trying to make deals with the governments of both Afghanistan and Iraq to maintain a military presence in those nations for many decades to come. We continue to spend massive amounts of taxpayer money on our military empire while these same taxpayers would like that money spent on domestic needs, including the repair of our rapidly deteriorating national infrastructure.

I think the nations of the world are looking at America and what it is doing and just shaking their heads in utter disbelief -- and in fear. Is this the very same country for which they formerly had such great respect and admiration? They wonder how much longer all this aggressive U.S. military action will continue around the world, and if they could be next target on the list.

Remember when the "Acting" President Ronald Reagan said, "America is a shining city upon a hill whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere." Does anyone still think that this is the way that the world views America today?

A further question might be to ask: does America even care whether it is respected by the other nations of the world? Do we really care what they may think about us? Well, I'd answer that in two ways: I'd say that the majority of Americans would like to regain the respect of the world that this nation once had and that they don't particularly like being viewed as hostile and belligerent.

In the case of our government that's an entirely different matter. By all its aggressive military actions around the world it appears that it is not concerned about having the respect of the world; it has a set agenda that involves military control over specific regions of the world, and it simply wants the nations of the world to accept that fact and not to interfere with how its being carried out.

The leadership of our government may not be the least concerned about respect because, in this highly dangerous world, power is what counts and that it has. Respect, therefore, is not an important issue to our leaders. But things have a way of changing quite dramatically, as history tells us. The day is fast approaching when America's vast military empire will have to be drastically scaled back because our failing economy and our financial instability will no longer be able to sustain it. All the meaningful indicators are telling us that a huge financial crisis is imminent.

When that happens we might just be looking for a few friends in the world to help us in our time of crisis, and the respect of other nations will, without a doubt, become extremely important. The question is; at that time, when we're looking for and needing those friends and their respect and support, will America get it; will it even deserve it?

Michael Payne is an independent progressive who writes articles about domestic social and political matters as well as American foreign policy. He is a U.S. Army veteran. His major goal is to convince Americans that our perpetual wars must end before they bankrupt our nation. His articles have appeared on Online Journal, Information Clearing House, Peak Oil, Google News and websites around the world.

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Wednesday, June 15, 2011

[Repercussions](#)



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[Pablo Ouziel: Spain's 'Indignant Ones'](#)

Spain's 'Indignant Ones'

by Pablo Ouziel [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 15, 2011 | CommonDreams | Global Research

While "Europe's slow-motion financial collapse" – as Mother Jones magazine described it in a June 6th article – continues to unravel, Spain, like other European states continues to implement anti-social-neo-liberal policies with strong opposition from the citizenry.

It has been one month since the country's 'Indignados' (Indignant Ones) movement claimed nonviolently sixty city-squares in cities across the country, calling for economic democracy, political justice and peace. Since then, much has happened within Spanish borders, and what is happening there is clearly spreading across Europe, where we have already witnessed social movements making similar demands. We have seen the Bastille in Paris, taken nonviolently by French 'Indignados' only to be quickly reclaimed by the country's police force. We have observed the rise of a parallel movement in Portugal where most city squares have also been camped on by 'Indignados', and where only hours before the country's general

elections protestors in Lisbon were attacked and beaten by police. We have witnessed how on that same night, in Athens, Greece, 80,000 protestors congregated in the city's main square in opposition to the country's 'austerity measures', waving banners in solidarity with the 'Indignados' of Spain and of other European country's.

Wherever you focus in Europe you hear the same cries of indignation. In some countries with more intensity than others, but the cry is becoming louder everywhere, and what seemed like a slow-motion financial collapse, is rapidly becoming an accelerated social catastrophe. Specifically in Spain, despite the political elite presenting a country recovering from the financial collapse, everyday things are getting worse economically, politically, and socially, and protest although nonviolent for the most part, could be on the verge of becoming violent unless political and economic elites begin to make some concessions.

On the economic front, Spain began June with comments from the European Commission about the potential of the country missing its economic growth and budget-deficit targets for the year; its recommendation was further economic reform. Then a report from the ratings agency Moody's, pointed out that the high Catalan deficit was affecting the solvency of the whole of Spain. A few days later, in the region of Castilla-La Mancha, the incoming administration of the rightwing Popular party (PP), before even taking office, had already proclaimed that the region was "totally bankrupt". Then, the National Statistics Institute revealed that Spain's property sales in April had been the lowest since the institute began reporting in 2007. Obviously, this stream of negative news coupled with discussions taking place in Europe regarding a potential debt default by Greece, affected Spain's bond sales and moved the country one step closer to a bailout, or a default followed by its subsequent debt restructuring.

On the political front, June has been equally intense, the government has approved by decree reforms against collective bargaining agreements, despite failed negotiations with the two major trade unions in the country. It has approved the extension, indefinitely of the country's Spanish military mission in Libya, and has announced the creation of a new NATO operations centre, which will control Spanish airspace and will help in missions coordinated from Southern Europe.

In regards to the social front, as of the first of June, the government warned that the 'Indignados' could not remain camped on city squares for much longer. Then, using a visit from Tony Blair, in which Blair said, "demonstrators should be heard but not allowed to govern", Spain's prime minister, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, addressed the request for electoral reform by the 'Indignados', by telling them this could only be possible through consensus from all political parties – a cowardly way of responding without complying.

In response to these numerous events, commissions of the 'Indignados' from squares across the country met in Madrid's Puerta del Sol Square, to discuss the future of the movement. Through a long process of popular assembly, they agreed to three important actions: First, to boycott the country's Town Halls as the new governments were sworn in following the recent regional and local elections; second, to abandon city squares, and move their social action into city neighbourhoods – in an attempt to broaden the movement's involvement with the rest of the citizenry; and third, to continue organizing protests on specific dates focused on particular issues – including a firm commitment to a global protest of 'Indignados' on October 15th.

The movement's first nationwide coordinated initiative since the spontaneous movement mushroomed on May 15th, the boycott of Town Halls, was well represented over the weekend by 'Indignados' across Spain. Demonstrators across the country blocked entrances to Town Halls, climbed onto the balconies, blocked official cars from exiting carparks, disturbed investiture sessions with incriminating speeches, and followed politicians across cities as they celebrated their victories, shouting to them, "shame on you!"

Sadly, the police force was equally mobilized. In Valencia, where the new government has ten of its members including its president facing corruption charges, police charged at demonstrators injuring twelve and arresting five. The vice president of Spain, Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, was forced to cancel a planned trip to the city in order to avoid further protests. In the city of Santiago de Compostela police also attacked the protestors. In the city of Madrid, police batons hit them. In the city of Salamanca five 'Indignados' were injured. In the city of Burgos two were arrested. In the city of Castellón, they were violently dispersed. In the city of Vigo, they were also dispersed; and, in the city of Palma de Mallorca, three were arrested.

Following the numerous arrests across the country, spontaneous demonstrations followed in front of police headquarters demanding the prompt release of those detained. Most protestors were released on bail.

As things stand in Spain right now, according to a survey published by newspaper El Pais, there exists wide support (81%) amongst the Spanish population for the movement. In fact, in addition to public intellectuals such as Vicent Navarro, Arcadi Oliveras, or Eduardo Galeano giving them support, political figures such as Santiago Carrillo, who was the secretary general of the Spanish Communist Party during the country's transition to democracy – a key voice throughout the transition, and Cayo Lara, the coordinator for the third largest political party in Spain, Izquierda Unida, have both aligned with the movement's views. Even Rosalía Mera, who is Spain's richest woman according to Forbes Magazine, has expressed public support for the 'Indignados'.

It seems clear, when one has an in depth look into current events unfolding in Spain, that these protests have hit a nerve throughout Spanish society, and although the movement is practicing a form of nonviolent direct democracy which is not familiar to most Spaniards – indeed to the majority of citizens in Western style democracies –, the present Spanish political, social, and economic climate is beginning to be shaped, at least partially, by its cries of indignation. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight, that unless economic and political elites begin to listen and engage in some serious dialogue with the 'Indignados' instead of sending out the police force to hit them on the head, the nonviolent stance of the majority of protestors could quickly turn into a violent response to sustained police brutality. After all, it is important to remember that this is a one-month-old spontaneous and heterogeneous movement, which is only now beginning to organize and present specific demands.

The nonviolent protestors on Spanish streets are not Gandhi's exemplary well-trained and disciplined nonviolent peacemakers, these protestors have not made pledges of nonviolence or have endured months of rigorous nonviolence training in Gandhian Ashrams. Whether the 'Indignados' can refrain from violence as the police continue to beat them, we will only learn as events unfold. However, if the country's elites have any dignity left, they will not continue testing their endurance and will instead begin a credible process of reform, which examines and addresses all of their demands. At the time of writing, Artur Mas, the President of the Generalitat (the government of the Catalan autonomous region) was forced to arrive to parliament in a police helicopter, as thousands of 'Indignados' blocked the entrance in an attempt to boycott the region's budget approval. They were shouting: "You do not represent us!" The parliamentary session began with only half of the representatives able to enter the building.

Pablo Ouziel is an activist and a freelance writer based in Spain. His articles and essays are available at pabloouziel.com

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Tuesday, June 14, 2011

[Mike Whitney: Are We Entering an Economic "Ice Age"?](#)

Are We Entering an Economic "Ice Age"?

By Mike Whitney [article link](#)

June 13, 2011 | Information Clearing House

Stocks fell sharply on Friday losing 172 points on the Dow Jones capping a 6-week slide that wiped out more than \$1 trillion from US equities markets. The winding down of the Fed's monetary easing program (QE2) and the increasingly gloomy economic data has roused Wall Street's bears and sent the bulls into full retreat. Market analysts continue to trim their estimates of growth for the second quarter (Q2) as signs of weakness in manufacturing, employment, housing, and consumer confidence cloud the long-term outlook and create more uncertainty about the strength of the recovery. Troubles

in Japan, the eurozone and China have only added to the pessimism fueling a bond market rally that's pushed yields on the benchmark 10-year Treasury below 3 percent. Low yields on the 10-year are a blinking red light indicating distress in the broader economy and growing investor fear. It's a sign that the mood on Wall Street has darkened. This is from Barron's:

“From Asia to Europe to the U.S., all the important economic indicators are rolling over. Some blame the Japanese tragedy; others, the weather. It is more than that. It is the result of policy decisions. Economic growth could slow to a crawl well into early next year. The stock market isn't priced for that. Analysts will cut their earnings estimates. There is 20% downside risk from the market's intraday May high. Once the economic news turns decisively disappointing, the authorities will come to the rescue and try to stimulate again.” (Barron’s mid-year roundtable, Felix Zulauf in this week’s Barron’s mid-year roundtable, via Credit Writedowns)

Slower growth means less activity and poorer earnings. It means there will be more layoffs, more cutbacks, and more retrenching. WSJ journalists Liz Moyer and Brett Philbin have already dubbed the coming months as "Wall Street's Summer of Pain", a moniker that draws from the fact that the present downturn is already "the longest slump since 2002" and has seen the Dow drop below 12,000. Even Fed chairman Ben Bernanke has called the recovery "frustratingly slow", although his assessment appears to be vastly understated. The housing market is already double dipping and Yale's Robert Shiller figures the worst is yet to come. This is from the Financial Post:

“My gut feeling is we might see a continuation of the decline” in home prices, Shiller said earlier Thursday at a Standard & Poor’s housing summit. He added that a 10% to 25% slump in real home prices “wouldn’t surprise me at all,” though he cautioned that was not a forecast.

Shiller pointed to the glut of unsold homes on the market and the large amount of homeowners under water on their mortgages as pressuring prices.

As for when home prices might bottom, Shiller told Insider that was unclear and it was possible prices could slide for 20 years.

“We’ve seen five years of decline already since the peak in 2006 and I don’t see evidence that we’re coming out of it,” he said.” ("America at tipping point, warns Shiller", Financial Post)

SocGen's Albert Edwards is even bleaker than Shiller opining that "We have entered a long valuation bear market which should end in extreme levels of cheapness consistent with an S&P around 400." Edwards predicts an economic "Ice Age" which will crush equities markets and see bond yields dip below 2 percent. Here's a clip from an article by James Sunshine at the Huffington Post which sums up the public's reaction to the deluge of grim news:

"Approximately 48 percent of Americans say they think that a Great Depression is either very or somewhat likely to occur within the year, according to a CNN Opinion Research Poll, the highest percentage of respondents that have stated that level of certainty since CNN first started asking the question in October 2008....

That Americans seem apprehensive about their economic futures should not be surprising considering the recently lackluster job creation. Last month, the private sector created only 54,000 net jobs while public sector employment actually saw a net decrease in jobs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Housing prices have also continued to fall, reaching new lows during 2011's first quarter according to Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller Index.

Confidence in the future is essential for economic growth, says economist Thomas Boston. "If you are concerned about job security, you are not likely to make the purchase, no matter how low interest rates might be." ("Nearly Half Of America Says U.S. Nearing Great Depression: CNN Poll, James Sunshine, Huffington Post)

For working people, conditions have never been worse. The Fed's bond purchasing program (QE2) send food and gas prices soaring, while home equity has continued to decline for 4 years straight. That's forced more people onto food stamps (44 million) while a "record number of Americans are using retirement funds as a source of immediate cash". (Zero Hedge)

Here's an excerpt from the post:

"On... Thursday, financial journalist and Newsweek columnist Joanne Lipman said, "Right now we have 30 percent of people who have 401(k)s have loans against their 401(k)s, which is a historic high. And the problem is, it's growing like crazy: By 2014, we're expecting to see 30 million people take loans against their 401(k)s." The raiding of the last ditch piggybank is on, and who can blame them?" ("30% Of People With A 401(k) Have Taken Out A Loan Against It: New All Time Record", Zero Hedge)

For many people, there's simply no other choice. Their access to easy credit has been blunted by tougher lending requirements while their wages have stayed flat. Where else can they get the money they need to maintain their present standard of living? All the gains in productivity in the last decade have gone to management leaving workers hanging on by their fingernails. And it's going to get a lot worse when the government cuts back on spending in an attempt to reduce the deficits. That will further intensify household deleveraging and trigger another painful round of debt deflation.

The Fed's Flow of Funds report, which was released last week, illustrates how tenuous our present situation really is. While the media has focused on the declining value of residential real estate (which fell \$339 billion to \$16.1 trillion in the first quarter) and on the rise in stock prices which were turbo-charged by Bernanke's bond-buying program, QE2. The real meat in the report is in "The Growth in Nonfinancial Debt" chart. The chart confirms that households are still deleveraging as they have been since early 2009. It also shows that the federal government's share of new debt is steadily shrinking as Obama's fiscal stimulus program (ARRA) winds down and Congress pushes for new belt tightening measures to trim the deficits. But what's interesting (and ominous) in the report is that business investment actually surged in the last quarter. (Business investment tends to be more volatile than personal consumption.) This suggests that business leaders were taken in by the uptick in manufacturing, employment and confidence that took place in late 2010 thinking that another expansion was underway. So, they doubled down and beefed up their investments. But now that the data has taken a turn for the worse and the 10-year has dropped below 3 percent, business investment will be severely slashed. When that happens, GDP will fall sharply (probably below 1 percent) and the failure of Obama's \$800 billion fiscal stimulus program to spark a rebound will be clear to everyone. That will put the Democrats into panic-mode at the worst possible time, just before the 2012 elections. If the economy stumbles, there's a good chance that the GOP will take the White House and both Houses of congress.

A GOP landslide in 2012 would be a disaster. Republican deficit hawks want to cut spending immediately which will inevitably lead to another excruciating slump. Check out this brief summary of Republican proposals by the Tax Policy Center. It helps to reveal the hidden risks of austerity measures:

"...more than 100 House Republicans have proposed to cut federal spending by \$550 billion in 2012.....This is an amazing number. It implies a 15 percent reduction in government spending in a single year—in the midst of a weak economy with unemployment that exceeds 9 percent. It is an austerity budget of historic proportions....

What would \$550 billion in across-the-board spending cuts mean? A 15 percent reduction in Social Security benefits would cut monthly payments for a typical retiree by \$180.....Does anybody think doctors would treat Medicare patients or that nursing homes would accept Medicaid residents in the wake of a 15 percent payment cut?" ("Rx for a Double-dip Recession: Cut Government Spending by 15 Percent", Tax Policy Center)

Even though Obama's stimulus (ARRA) was too small and poorly targeted to get the economy back on track, it does show that his advisors have a basic grasp of economics. The same cannot be said about the Republican plan. It is sheer madness. If the GOP takes the White House in 2012, there will be another Great Depression. There's no doubt about it.

Note: The moniker economic "Ice Age" is credited to SocGen's Albert Edwards - <https://www.sgresearch.com/>

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The Keys to Economic Growth

by Dr. Ron Paul [article link](#)

June 14, 2011 | The Daily Bell

The Daily Bell [home page](#)

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Monday, June 13, 2011

Enslavement



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Sunday, June 12, 2011

Shamus Cooke: The Rich Are Destroying the Economy

The Rich Are Destroying the Economy

by Shamus Cooke [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 12, 2011 | CommonDreams | Global Research

Ever since the Great Recession shook the foundations of the U.S. economy, President Obama has been promising recovery. Evidence of this recovery, we were told, was manifested in the massive post-bailout profits corporations made. Soon enough, the President assured us, these corporations would tire of hoarding mountains of cash and start a hiring bonanza, followed by raising wages and benefits. It was either wishful thinking or conscious deception. The recent stock market meltdown has squashed any hope of a corporate-led recovery.

The Democrats fought the recession by the same methods the Republicans used to create it: allowing the super rich to recklessly dominate the economy while giving them massive handouts. This strategy, commonly referred to as Reaganomics or Trickle Down Economics, is now religion to both Democrats and Republicans; never mind the staged in-fighting for the gullible or complicit media.

When it becomes obvious to even the President that the economic recovery never existed beyond the bank accounts of the rich, questions will have to be answered. Why, for example, did nobody in either political party foresee the disastrous consequences of the bailouts? Not only did the U.S. deficit drastically increase but the same U.S. corporations that caused

the recession were given reinforcement for their destructive actions, ensuring that it would continue unabated.

In his book, [Crisis Economics](#), Nouriel Roubini outlines the insane response to the recession by Republicans and Democrats. Because both parties simply threw money at the banks and hedge funds instead of punishing them, a condition of "moral hazard" was created, meaning, that banks would assume another bailout would come their way if they destroyed the economy again -- too big too fail, remember? Roubini explains how the Democrats allowed the "too big" banks to get even bigger; how Wall Street salaries based on short-term profits went unregulated; how the regulations that were put into place were inadequate and filled with loopholes; how nothing of any significance changed.

Roubini has also written extensively about how the post-bailout Federal Reserve policies were fueling a commodity bubble that may be in the midst of bursting, possibly triggering a double dip recession. Essentially the big banks and rich investors were borrowing cheap dollars from the Fed and investing abroad in commodities with the hopes of higher returns. Roubini states:

"The risk is that we are planting the seeds of the next financial crisis...this asset bubble is totally inconsistent with a weaker recovery of economic and financial fundamentals." (October 27, 2009).

This investor-created commodity bubble pushed up prices in oil, food, and other basic products, causing further pain for working families and the economy as a whole. This speculative bubble was easily predictable but ignored by both political parties, since they claimed the bubble was a sign of recovery.

Another mainstream economist, Paul Krugman, also admits that the rich's death-grip on the U.S. political and economic system is causing pain for everybody else:

"Far from being ready to spend more on job creation, both parties agree that it's time to slash spending - destroying jobs in the process - with the only difference being one of degree...policy makers are catering almost exclusively to the interests of rentiers [rich investors] - those who derive lots of income from assets, who lent large sums of money in the past, often unwisely, but are now being protected from loss at everyone else's expense." ([June 10, 2011](#))

Krugman explains that this process continues because the rich dominate the political system through campaign contributions, "access to policy makers," promises of high paying corporate jobs after their congressional term is over, and good ol' fashion corruption. Because he's a true blue Democrat at heart, Krugman nevertheless focuses most of his rage on Republicans.

Krugman's repeated calls to Democrats and Republicans to create jobs have fallen on deaf ears. Both parties agree that the "private sector" [corporations] should create jobs; until they decide to hire, nothing will happen. This is not merely "bad policy," as liberals like Krugman like to fret about, but the conscious agenda of the rich. Corporations and rich investors love high unemployment. The Kansas City Star explains why:

"Last year [2010], for the second year in a row, U.S. companies got more work out of their employees while spending less on overall labor costs." ([February 3, 2011](#))

It really is that simple. High unemployment creates a downward pressure on wages, allowing employers to work the remaining employees harder and thus to increase profits. This dynamic, combined with the above commodity speculation, has been the entire basis for the corporate recovery, while working people have literally seen nothing beneficial.

This process is an extension of the bailouts, in the sense that more wealth is being transferred from working people to the corporations. Since consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of the U.S. economy, policies like these ensure that another crisis is inevitable.

Further complicating matters is the ending of the Federal Reserve's Quantitative Easing program (printing money), which

amounted to the Fed buying \$600 billion in U.S. Treasury bonds since last fall, essentially funding the U.S. debt and driving down interest rates.

Since the Fed was buying 60 percent of the bonds, a new creditor will need to be found; and this lender will likely require higher interest rates before loaning to the U.S. government, to make sure the loan is profitable. And although different nations buy U.S. debt for different reasons, much of this debt is bought by rich U.S. citizens, who will put the squeeze on the rest of us that have to pay back this debt. The Washington Times explains:

"...Bill Gross, the head of America's own Pimco bond fund, the largest buyer of bonds worldwide, recently reduced Pimco's holdings of Treasuries to zero out of concern that they weren't yielding enough given the risks of inflation and deficit spending." ([June 7, 2011](#))

When the Federal Reserve raises interest rates to satisfy these rich investors, the economy will likely take a further nosedive. It appears, then, that the rich have a win-win situation: they got free bailout money, which increased the deficit; and because the deficit is too high, the rich want higher interest rates for investing in U.S. Treasury Bonds. In both instances working people pay the bills.

This insanity cannot be stopped by conventional measures, since politicians are tone deaf to anything that doesn't ring of corporate cash. The jobs crisis continues as a result of the policy agreed to by both Democrats and Republicans. The labor movement has a special role to play in reversing the above policies.

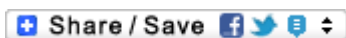
The corporate-led discussion around cutting social programs to fix the deficits -- on a state and national level -- can be challenged by a nationally coordinated campaign of unions and community allies demanding: Tax the Rich! This demand is significant because it can address both the deficits and the jobs crisis: a massive public works program can be funded by taxing the corporations and the wealthy to pre-Reagan levels. And it makes complete sense because the growing inequalities in wealth over the past three decades has meant a spectacular concentration of wealth at the top. The rich have plenty of money to spare.

Organized labor needs to bring masses of people in the street all over the country in order to get attention and pressure the government to respond to these demands. And it can succeed, especially if it organizes a serious, protracted campaign and especially if this campaign does not get funneled into supporting Democratic candidates, the surest way to kill campaign momentum.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka [recently spoke](#) in favor of a strong, independent labor movement. This is the direction it must take, rather than relying on the Democrats. The labor movement must get its act together, unite to put up a fight and demand specific policies that can concretely address the crisis faced by millions of working people.

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Saturday, June 11, 2011

[Pentecost: Spiritual Freedom](#)

Holy Days: Family and Community

The Seven Annual Sabbaths

Our inherent value = love and truth; the communitarian way, the environment instituted in the pages of the OT and exemplified in the NT has a built-in reminder to maintain "the continual", the daily worship (the practise of the way): the annual Holy Days, the festivals; the shared symbolic behavior so important to fellowship and cognition.

The seven annual Sabbaths instituted forever not only the Holy Days [God's Plan of Salvation for humanity] but the way of life within, explicit in the harvest feasts: the communitarian way, the *path* [personal achievement of true humanity] - the first day of the sacred year (the annual beginning); the Passover (the sacrifice, the reconciliation, the acceptance; the SAGE attempt to silence); ULB (the putting away of sin, the commitment); Pentecost (the gift of God; a society of the gift); the fall harvest season, Trumpets, Atonement, FOT, LGD: the return Christ, of His message; the putting away of the adversary (Mammon; the alienated, privileged attitudes); the harvest feast (feast of booths, the millennium, the communal reconstruction); the judgement (the Book of Life opened; all of humanity to share in the way).

The **Passover** observance at even (sunset), in the NT the Last Supper; the wine and unleavened bread taken by the Baptised in acknowledgement of the sacrifice of Christ Jesus for the remission of sins and in rededication as the very flesh and blood of the "body of Christ"; the Night To Be Much Remembered, observed the next sunset, was instituted to remember the Exodus of Israel from Egypt (typifies sin), the 7 **Days of Unleavened Bread** [ULB] begin; they picture the removal of sin from our lives; no leavened bread or products of any kind (the puffed-up lives, attitudes); the first and last days are annual Sabbaths; next is **Pentecost**, which pictures God's Gift of the Holy Spirit to the Christian Community, the 3rd annual Sabbath.

The **Feast of Trumpets** pictures the return of Christ; the Second Coming when Christ directly intervenes in world affairs and establishes the government or Kingdom of God over mankind; the beginning of the Millennium; the next event is pictured by the **Day of Atonement**; the binding and separation of Satan, the author of all sin (the transgression of God's Ten Commandments) away from mankind until after the Millennium; next is the **Feast of Tabernacles** [FOT] or Booths, a feast of ingathering, a seven day festival where we leave our homes and gather together if possible; it pictures the Millennium when Jesus Christ is Lord and King over all the earth, when the Holy Spirit is granted to all mankind alive and born during the Millennium and the earth is prepared for the next great event to take place; that event is pictured by the **Last Great Day** [LGD], the resurrection of every man, woman and child who has ever lived/been conceived (including the stillborn and aborted, placed into their parents arms); the dead stand before God; this is the Great White Throne Judgement, not a condemnation to a hell as traditional Christianity believes, but a time when the "Book of Life" is opened to all of humanity and they are given their first opportunity to receive God's instruction, to learn his way of love based on the 10 Commandments and ultimately to be born into the very Family of God.

The spring (3 Sabbaths) and fall Holy Days (4 Sabbaths) picture the plan of redemption for mankind and are explained throughout the Bible; by keeping them as commanded by God every year, the Church (the community) is kept in constant remembrance of God's plan for mankind and man's destiny to be born into the Family of God and ultimately to share in the rule and continuing creation of the universe.

MM Book 2 Chapter 10-17

When we come in contact with, or come up against, "character" that *lacks* God [in others or in ourselves], it is an opportunity to express God: INIQUITY PURGED BY MERCY AND TRUTH [mercy/forgiveness] – all of us have been casualties of the prevailing systemic character, the fear "bullet" [arrow] that is shot deep into us; God will heal the "inflicted wound", and heal us !! — we must pull-back "for" engagement [from the evil; we are in conflict of interest]; WE MUST *OCCUPY* COMMUNITY, WE MUST *PLACE* GOD'S PRESENCE INTO WHEREVER WE ARE [location or situation]; GOD'S CHARACTER AND ABILITIES ARE OURS TO PLACE !! – WE *ARE* GOD FAMILY, WE EMBODY [our being] AND CREATE [our doing] COMMUNITY, THIS *IS* OUR RESPONSE-ABILITY !! — OUR MINISTRY [ministration] IS ** OUR RELATIONSHIP(S) **, OUR COMMUNITY !! – AGAPE LOVE IS THE GIFT, AND THE GIVING !!

“... The three main festivals in the Bible are Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles – in the physical application Passover is

the festival of political freedom, Tabernacles of economic freedom, and Pentecost, the central and most important, is a festival of spiritual freedom [see Harris L. Selig, "Links to Eternity", p. 370; Richard C. Nickels, Giving and Sharing, "Pentecost Paper"]:

PASSOVER = POLITICAL FREEDOM – EXODUS (out of bondage), Christ Systemic;
PENTECOST = SPIRITUAL FREEDOM – 10C, Covenant People, Holy Spirit, COG;
TABERNACLES = ECO-NOMIC FREEDOM – Ingathering, Harvest, KINGDOM OF GOD.

Previously posted MMr March 29, 2010 and September 09, 2010

MM Book 2 Chapter 6-14

The 10 Commandments [10C] are a mental environment, each an attitude of mind [an expression of God's very own mind, His character]; “thou shalt not” implies the opposite “thou shalt *do*” [ie., in God's community there is no need, or desire for stealing, all shall freely share], our involvement and responsibility, our family consciousness [of God and man, our relationship], our personality; Philippians 2:5, “let this *mind be in you* that was also in Christ Jesus” – the 10C represent *together* the ultimate, genuine *survival* mentation matrix and paradigm [intelligent design, application (obedience); psychologically, the deep things of God; the ** COMMANDMENTS OF LIFE **]; 2 Cor 10:5, “... bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ” – the 10C are active, real, *living* laws, physically and spiritually [with real penalties when broken; witness the world], they *are* the God Family, they are the Family’s ** Law of Agape Love **, yet the 10C and God are not real to most people !! – it is the transgression of these laws [1 John 3:4, sin is the transgression of the law] that has separated God and man, that has made the reality of our evil systemic [and the resultant suffering engendered] paramount in our lives – these laws are the only way to a *sustainable existence* for man on this planet; they are God’s systemic, His guiding principles, they are what we were designed for !! — the reality of this world must be God’s reality, we must make God our own, a systemic based on “give” NOT a systemic based on “take”, a true systemic of resultant blessings NOT a false, evil systemic of curses [an absence of the blessings !!] – these “living laws” engender [to beget; to bring into being; cause; produce; originate] a *true life*, a living, symbiotic environment; they are part-and-parcel of God’s Holy Spirit, and as such THEY IMPART GOD’S LIFE AND WITHOUT THEM WE WILL CEASE TO EXIST !!

MM Book 2 Chapter 6-16

The Works (spiritually/physically) of the Devil are opposed to the Law of God, to the Family:

- 1 you shall have other gods before God, you shall serve me;
- 2 you shall make images of the Beast, the hierarchical systemic;
- 3 you shall take/carry God’s name in vain, you shall worship me;
- 4 you shall NOT obey God’s Sabbath;
- 5 you shall NOT honor your mother and father;
- 6 you shall murder;
- 7 you shall commit adultery;
- 8 you shall steal;
- 9 you shall bear false witness;
- 10 you shall covet.

this is a description of a world systemic *of the devil*, of every evil way !! [John 8:44 Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the *lusts of your father ye will do*. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.] — BY DESTROYING THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL (the Works of the Flesh) WE FULFIL THE LAW OF GOD, WE FULFIL *OUR* PURPOSE !! — there is much brilliance in the world but the current, the force of flow lighting and applying that intelligence, is a fallen Angel, NOT THE FORCE AND LIGHT OF GOD’S WORD !! — man took to himself Satan’s knowledge of *good and evil* and that is the systemic in the world today; both good and evil are existent, and the evil separates God from man [our sins; our choice of the evil way].

Mammon or Messiah Book 2 [web page](#) (widescreen)

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Brian Cooney: The Mythology of Individualism

The Mythology of Individualism

by Brian Cooney [article link](#)

June 10, 2011 | OpEdNews

In her Textbook of Americanism, GOP saint Ayn Rand wrote: "The basic principle of the United States of America is Individualism." At a 2005 celebration honoring Rand, Republican young gun Paul Ryan declared that every battle fought by Republicans "usually comes down to one conflict - individualism versus collectivism."

Randian conservatives are ok with private collectives--even corporations powered by the activities of hundreds of thousands of employees and revenues larger than many nations. What they fear and loathe is the political collective, a people or community pursuing a common good through government action.

As the influential libertarian philosopher Robert Nozick put it, "There is no social entity with a good ... There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives." In other words, society is nothing but a multitude of individuals for whom there is no public good, only private goods sought by different individuals and groups.

Nozick would add that, in a free society, no individual or group should use the power of government to force others to contribute to their private goals such as food or medicine. Doing so amounts to enslavement. As Rand Paul said, if you want to legislate universal healthcare, "you believe in slavery."

The only acceptable role for government is to protect individuals' property and liberty from aggressors.

Individualists want a political system built around self-made, self-reliant and value-creating agents whose connections to other humans are purely voluntary or contractual. That's why they see the free market as society itself, as the natural environment for human nature.

Of course, the very idea of a market society is hard to reconcile with the individualist picture of humans. Our constant transactions with each other show our dependence on goods and services provided by others.

Individualists would respond that these transactions are voluntary in a free-market society. Each of us can choose with whom to deal and which things we do for ourselves rather than rely on others.

We make ourselves who we are and we create values by these choices. When we get what we want through market transactions, we draw on our own resources to offer something that another person needs in return.

Behold the individualist's new Adam--a gift to the world from our exceptional culture. This muscular ego is the creature of what Herbert Hoover called "the American system of rugged individualism."

There is something very appealing about this picture. All of us want our children to become self-reliant and value-creating individuals, and a healthy society needs to nurture these traits in all its citizens.

However, this picture is deeply flawed because what it leaves out is just as important as what it includes. No one is self-made. A society makes individuals just as much as individuals make a society.

Nothing is closer to the very core of an individual than their thought processes. Yet it is language that makes thought possible by supplying the mind with ideas and rules for combining them. There is no private language--it's community

property.

A few individuals manage to put words or ideas together in very original ways, like Shakespeare or Einstein. Yet even they would have been impossible without their societies' language and education, and without institutions (such as the theater and science) which they did not create.

Every individual's life is an intersection of pre-scripted roles (e.g. being parents, spouses or professionals) that we did not invent, and without which our behavior would be unintelligible to others or to ourselves. Like actors on a stage, we play these roles more or less well.

All our labor, however skilled, is a social product, a joint production of the labors of countless others such as teachers, farmers and city employees. They build and maintain the environment or infrastructure without which our own work would be impossible.

The self-made individual touted by Randian individualists is a fiction, a distortion. People who believe in this fiction suffer from what we can call Trumpism.

Donald Trump is the perfect symbol of the craziness of individualism. His brief candidacy collapsed as he was laughed off the political stage. Because of his ridiculous self-importance and exaggerated sense of power, people quickly saw him as a clown.

Trumpism makes Americans tolerant of extreme inequality in wealth and income. The top 5% owned 62% of the nation's wealth in 2007. Trumpists would say that these numbers reflect the immensely greater individual contributions of the very rich.

Finally, it's simply false to say that there are only private goods, and the only legitimate function of government is to protect them. The society that makes our individual lives possible has many important and essentially public goods.

These include infrastructure, education, a clean environment, social insurance, and basic scientific research of the sort that created the internet and will launch nanotechnology. These public goods empower and liberate our individual lives.

Brian Cooney: I'm a retired philosophy professor at Centre College. I also am a regular columnist for our local paper, The Danville Advocate-Messenger. My columns have also appeared in the Lexington Herald-Leader and Buzzflash.com. My last book was Posthumanity-Thinking Philosophically about the Future (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004). I am a strong opponent of the gung-ho version of capitalism peddled here and abroad as the "Washington consensus."

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Friday, June 10, 2011

[Tom Whipple: The Peak Oil Crisis: The Gathering Storm](#)

The Peak Oil Crisis: The Gathering Storm

By Tom Whipple [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 09, 2011 | Countercurrents | Falls Church News-Press

The world is beginning to look a lot like the August of 1914 or perhaps the summer of 1939 all over again. This time

instead of the great powers of central Europe dragging the rest of us into a European affair, it seems that nearly every corner of the earth is facing some sort of imminent disaster that could combine into a very unpleasant situation.

In America, where we have been living beyond our means for decades, the time has come to pay the piper. Trillion dollar deficits, rising unemployment, printing of money, \$4 gasoline, a weakening dollar and entitlements are combining into a grim outlook for our immediate future. Add to this the toll taken by climate change - unprecedented outbreaks of tornadoes, massive floods, and record droughts - throw in a hurricane or two and we are on the way to serious disruptions.

Politically America is split over what to do about all this. Many are simply unwilling to admit that numerous forces are trending towards disaster and keep talking about the return to prosperity. Some favor still more tax cuts until there is little left of government, or increased oil well drilling as the universal balm; some favor Keynesian pump-priming and emissions controls. Still others are totally confused by events that are foreign to the way of life they have known and seek solace in demagogic claims to return the country to growth and prosperity.

The EU too is beset by problems. Although Germany and France seem to have avoided the excesses that are besetting others, most of the EU members, like the U.S., are suffering from living beyond their means. The Union has been bouncing from economic crisis to crisis for months. Regional sources of energy -- coal, oil, and natural gas -- are playing out and the continent will soon be even more dependent on imported energy to keep moving about and the lights on. Germany's and Switzerland's recent decisions to forego nuclear power stations only add to the problem.

Despite gloomy prospects for European prosperity, it still looks good to millions from the undeveloped parts of the Eastern Hemisphere who in increasing numbers are risking their lives to make it into the EU where the lights still work. The steadily increasing global population, currently growing by circa 70 million each year, with rising expectations brought about by the communications revolution, is putting an increasing strain on supplies of food, water, and electricity. Shortages of these essentials are becoming increasingly common, and these shortages in turn are leading to increased turmoil and violence. Climate change is taking its toll across the underdeveloped world with droughts and record temperatures being seen across much of the world.

For those who can afford air conditioning, the rising temperatures are putting an increasing strain on power stations and the sources of fossil fuel that supply them. Around the world, hydro-power dams are producing well below their rated capacity.

There are some areas of temporary respite. Things in Russia are moving along pretty well with oil production and exports hitting post-Soviet highs and global oil prices are keeping the coffers well filled. There was a little problem with a drought last summer, which took out so much of the crop that Moscow had to stop exporting grain, thereby playing a behind the scenes role in the Egyptian uprising. Moscow is still benefiting from unloading all those peripheral countries that the Czars and the Soviets had taken over a century or so ago.

Still the Russians have their troubles: their oil fields should be going into depletion in the next few years and the remaining separatist groups are still blowing up things in Moscow.

South Asia - Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh - seem to be suffering the most at the minute. Available power supplies are not sufficient to cope with unusually high temperatures and still keep factories and vital infrastructure such as water pumps running. Even India with 1.2 billion people and an economic growth rate almost as impressive as China's is running

into trouble as water and coal supplies are running short. It seems inevitable that economies across southern Asia will be going into decline shortly likely coupled with increasing political turmoil.

Asia is still doing well, except in Japan where tales of its nuclear meltdowns seems to grow worse every day. It is increasingly obvious that the tsunami/nuclear events have dealt Japan a considerable economic blow which even in normal times would take many years for recovery. Given the increasing costs of fossil fuels, all of which must be imported, Japan may be on course to becoming a shadow of its former self.

The other economic power houses of Asia - Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore - are relatively small and have for the most part

little or no sources of fossil fuel. Eventually high energy costs will lay them low, but in the interim, they may be bright spots in an otherwise dismal global economy.

Now we get to China, which has enjoyed phenomenal economic growth in recent decades and continues to expand at 9 or 10 percent a year. Although the numbers still look good for another year of rapid economic growth, just below the surface are some serious troubles. The aquifers that supply water to 440 million people living in the north China plain are about to run dry. Beijing is rushing to bring water from the Yangtze basin to the north in an effort that has been likened to diverting the Mississippi River to New York and New England.

At the minute parts of China seem to be simultaneously beset by the worst drought in 100 years and the worst floods in 200. When the serious environmental problems are coupled with the current power crisis, a case can be made that the years of rapid growth in China are nearing an end. The concern for the rest of the world is that Beijing with trillions in foreign currency reserves may begin importing food, oil, and minerals in such quantities that there won't be much left for the rest of us.

Tom Whipple is a retired government analyst and has been following the peak oil issue for several years.

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Global Economic Crisis Deepening

By Stephen Lendman [article link](#)

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Thursday, June 9, 2011

[O my people, they which lead thee cause \[thee\] to err, and destroy the way of thy paths](#)



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Robert C. Koehler: Predator Syndrome

Predator Syndrome

by Robert C. Koehler [article link](#)

June 9, 2011 | CommonDreams

There are twenty thousand nuclear weapons on the planet, a quarter of them ready for launch at a moment's suicidal impulse, aimed at countries that stopped being enemies two decades ago. It's six minutes to midnight. "Disarmament" has as much cachet in America's corridors of power as "socialism."

And the U.S. House, bless its evil heart, has just sliced the Achilles tendon of peace. It recently passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 2011, which has many seriously worrisome provisions, two of which stand in stark, grinning contrast to one another.

One part of the bill, which now heads to the Senate, would give the president unilateral authority to pursue the "war on terror" anywhere in the world. Anywhere evil resides, the president could go after it, no congressional approval needed. It's kind of like that already, but this would legalize the streamlining of war and help push the United States, in its role as global superpower, completely beyond the constraints of democracy.

Another part of the bill hampers implementation of the New START nuclear arms control treaty between the U.S. and Russia, which calls for a modest reduction by both countries to 1,550 deployed nuclear weapons. The bill ties implementation of START to weapon systems "modernization," ensuring that warhead reduction has nothing to do with disarmament.

Lawrence Korb and Alex Rothman, writing recently on Huffington Post, point out that the bill puts three restrictions on the implementation of START:

It bars funding for warhead reduction until the Departments of Defense and Energy certify their commitment to spend \$180 billion in nuclear weapons modernization over the next decade; it prohibits the elimination of non-deployed warheads until two next-generation nuclear facilities become operational (right now scheduled for 2024); and "in a historically unprecedented move," Korb and Rothman write, "the NDAA attempts to bar the president from unilaterally reducing the

U.S. nuclear stockpile below New START levels or amending U.S. nuclear targeting strategy without congressional approval."

In other words, the bill would grant the current and all future presidents the authority to wage war unilaterally, that is, "war on terror," an unwinnable and therefore endless war against a concept or tactic; but it would prohibit the president from pursuing peace unilaterally, by reducing the country's obscene stockpile of thousands of undeployed, unimaginably destructive nuclear weapons below START levels.

U.S. nuclear weapons planning is based on the concept of "fewer but newer — nuclear weapons forever," Jackie Cabasso, executive director of the Western States Legal Foundation, recently commented to the Inter Press Service.

And the Republican-controlled House is hell-bent on crafting the perfect predator state, one that can wage war without the least need to entertain doubt or acknowledge conscience.

"Citizens who brawl on the streets are punished," writes Barbara Ehrenreich in *Blood Rites*, her study of the roots of war. "Nations that go to war are feared and often respected. . . . At a more archaic level of the imagination, the nation-as-organism becomes something more, or less, than human. Here is a 'creature' that, according to Hegel, requires blood in order to sustain its life — the blood of actual human beings. We recognize, in this view of a nation, another version of humanity's primordial enemy and original deity: the predator beast."

This is our dilemma, those of us — most of humanity, I'm quite certain — on the other side of the nuclear divide, wanting a

future for our children far saner than present reality. The sustaining myth of the nation-state is conquest and domination, and the more power a nation attains, the more, I fear, it grounds itself in this myth.

Thus while historical forces have pushed the United States into a role of extraordinary leadership, with unprecedented global reach and influence, at a time when a new sort of geopolitics is crucial if the species is to survive, our national vision has grown, I fear, ever more stunted. The country's controlling forces, infected with predator syndrome, have committed themselves to the futile vision of more of the same, and this vision is especially futile in the realm of nuclear weapons and nuclear war.

Nuclear weapons forever!

What is it going to take to cause a shift, a letting go at the national level of the myth that might makes right? As individuals, most people begin letting go of it before adolescence.

Yet at a national level, the worst of our impulses rise and converge. They become consensus. We are now governed by the consensus that the United States has every right to continue not simply to possess but to develop, at staggering cost, new generations of nuclear weapons, to make them more efficient, more usable . . . toward an end no one dares say.

But that end is clear enough to those outside the consensus. All we need is the right enemy.

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Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. His new book, [Courage Grows Strong at the Wound](#) is now available. Contact him at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his website at commonwonders.com.

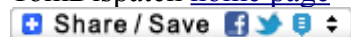
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100% Scared: How the National Security Complex Grows on Terrorism Fears

by Tom Engelhardt [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 9, 2011 | CommonDreams | TomDispatch

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James Petras: Afghanistan: Why Civilians are Killed?

Afghanistan: Why Civilians are Killed? A People's War: Not a "War on Terror"

by Prof. James Petras [article link](#)

June 9, 2011 | Global Research

Introduction:

The recent rash of civilian killings by NATO forces in occupied Afghanistan raises several basic questions: Why do US – NATO air and ground forces kill so many civilians, so persistently, over such long stretches of time, in regions throughout the country? Why have the number of civilians killed, increased in the course of the conflict? Why do NATO-US airplanes continue to bomb civilian housing and village gatherings and ground troops indiscriminately assault homes and workshops? Why are the pleas of NATO collaborator President Karzai to desist in home bombings go unheeded? Finally, knowing that the killing of civilians, entire families including children, mothers and the elderly alienates the local population and breeds widespread and profound hostility, why do the NATO-US military refuse to alter their tactics and strategy?

Explanations and Excuses for Civilian Killings:

Apologists for the NATO killings of civilians are as abundant as their explanations are lacking in substance. Pentagon spokespeople speak of “accidents”, “errors of war”, “collateral damage”; media pundits blame the guerrilla fighters for engaging in warfare in areas populated by civilians; neo-conservative academics and their “think tank” colleagues blame Islamic fundamentalism for converting villagers to their cause and “forcing” NATO to kill civilians in order to create martyrs and to use their deaths as a recruiting device.

These patently superficial explanations raise more questions than answers, or in some cases, inadvertently refute the justification for the entire war. The “error of war” argument begs a more basic question: what kind of war is NATO-US engaged in that constantly finds the guerrillas ‘melting’ into the population, while the occupation breaks down doors and perceives each and every household as a possible sanctuary, or outpost of the resistance? What kind of military relies on high altitude fighter planes and pilotless planes directed from distant command posts to attack population centers, in which commerce, farming and household economies engage the population? Clearly only an army of occupation, an imperial army, is willing to repeatedly sacrifice a multitude of civilians to kill a single or a few suspected combatants. Only a military operating in a hostile civilian environment is going to assume that lodged behind every door of every home there is an “enemy”; that every family is sheltering a combatant; that it is better to “go in shooting” than to risk a bullet in the gut. ‘Accidents of war’ do not ‘just happen’ for an entire decade, covering an entire country. The killing of civilians is a result of a war of imperial conquest against an entire people who resist the occupation in whatever form is appropriate to their circumstance. The pilots and ground troops recognize that they are a hostile alien force, whose presence is commanded from above by Generals and politicians dealing with abstract schemes of ‘terrorists-linked to Al Qaeda’ that have no relation to the dense web of personal bonds of solidarity between resistance fighters and civilians on the ground in Afghanistan.

Working from these abstract categories, the strategists label extended family compounds as ‘hideouts’; family gatherings as ‘terrorist meetings’; trade caravans as ‘guerilla smugglers’. The conflicting interests of the imperial politicians, generals, strategists and military officers on the one hand and the civilian population and resistance form an immense gap. The greater the number of civilian/combatants killed the faster the career advances for imperial officers –eager for promotions and prized pensions. “Success”, according to the imperial world view is measured internationally by the number of client rulers; nationally by the number of flags pinned to the war maps denoting ‘secure cities’; and locally by the body counts of massacred families.

On the ground, among the millions in intimate family and clan circles, where sorrow and anger co-exist, resistance in all of its manifold forms unfolds: Sacred vows and the profane pledges to ‘fight on’ grow out of the millions of daily humiliations affecting young and old, wives and husbands, in homes, markets, roads and by-ways. The hostile stare of a mother sheltering an infant from soldiers breaking into a bedroom is as telling as the crackle of gunfire of a sniper hidden in a mountain crevice.

A People’s War: Not a War on Terror

The killing of civilians is not “accidental”. The fundamental reason that so many civilians are killed, everyday, in every region for over a decade, is because the civilians and the combatants are indistinguishable. The image of the Afghan combatants as some kind of footloose professional bomb throwing terrorist is completely off the mark. Most Afghan fighters have families, cultivate farmland and tend herds; they raise families and attend mosque; they are ‘part-time civilians’ and part-time fighters. Only in the schematic minds of the “great strategists of war” in the Pentagon and NATO headquarters do such distinctions exist. Their deadly military mission to ‘save the people from terrorist fundamentalists’, a self-serving self-deception, is, in fact, a ladder up the military-political hierarchy. Each step up depends on waging a ‘just war’ to a successful conclusion.

The civilian-combatants are a mass popular phenomenon. How else can we explain their capacity to sustain armed resistance for over a decade, indeed, advancing with the passing of time? How can we explain their military success against the armed forces and advisers from 40 countries, including the US , Europe and a clutch of Afro-Asian-Latin American mercenaries? How can we explain the growing resistance despite suffering from military occupation, backed by the most

advanced technological instruments of war? How can we explain the ebb of popular support for the war in the ‘Conqueror’s country and the growing number of recruits for the Resistance? The combatants have the loyalty of the Afghan people; they do not have to spend billions to buy the spurious ‘loyalties’ of mercenaries who can and have at any moment ‘turned their guns the other way’.

Weddings are bombed because combatants attend weddings – along with hundreds of relatives and friends. Villages are bombed because peasants cultivate crops, which contribute to the resistance. Civilian shelters become military sanctuaries. Afghanistan is polarized: the US military versus a people in arms. Faced with this reality, the real policy of NATO-Pentagon is to rule or/and ruin. Each bomb killing dozens of civilians in search of one sharpshooter deepens the isolation and discredit of the puppet ruler. “President” Karzai has seen his mission of building a ‘civilian base’ to reconstruct the country utterly discredited. His impotent complaints to NATO to cease bombing civilian targets fall on deaf ears; because the NATO command knows very well that ‘the civilians’ are the ‘deep resistance’ – the vast reserve of support for the combatants; their eyes and ears far excel all the electronic intelligence devices of the Occupier. Just as Karzai cannot convince the civilians to turn against the combatants so he cannot convince the imperial armies to stop bombing civilian homes and gatherings.

Washington knows that with each withdrawal (or retreat), the terrain, the towns and villages are occupied by resistance fighters who emerge from everywhere. The best that the US-NATO politicians can negotiate is a safe orderly departure. The best that they can hope is that their local collaborators do not defect or flee abroad prematurely turning over billions of dollars in military ordinance to the resistance. The best the collaborators can hope is that they will secure an exit route, a visa, an overseas account and a comfortable second home abroad. What is absolutely clear is that the US , NATO and its collaborators will have no role to play in the newly independent Afghanistan.

James Petras is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Wednesday, June 8, 2011

Mujahid Kamran: The Elite, the 'Great Game' and World War III

The Elite, the 'Great Game' and World War III

by Prof. Mujahid Kamran [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 7, 2011 | Global Research | New Dawn Special Issue 16

The control of the US, and of global politics, by the wealthiest families of the planet is exercised in a powerful, profound and clandestine manner. This control began in Europe and has a continuity that can be traced back to the time when the bankers discovered it was more profitable to give loans to governments than to needy individuals.

These banking families and their subservient beneficiaries have come to own most major businesses over the two centuries during which they have secretly and increasingly organised themselves as controllers of governments worldwide and as arbiters of war and peace.

Unless we understand this we will be unable to understand the real reasons for the two world wars and the impending Third World War, a war that is almost certain to begin as a consequence of the US attempt to seize and control Central Asia. The only way out is for the US to back off – something the people of the US and the world want, but the elite does not.

The US is a country controlled through the privately owned Federal Reserve, which in turn is controlled by the handful of banking families that established it by deception in the first place.

In his interesting book *The Secret Team*, Col. Fletcher Prouty, briefing officer of the US President from 1955-63, narrates a remarkable incident in which Winston Churchill made a most revealing utterance during World War II: "On this particular night there had been a heavy raid on Rotterdam. He sat there, meditating, and then, as if to himself, he said, 'Unrestricted submarine warfare, unrestricted air bombing – this is total war.' He continued sitting there, gazing at a large map, and then said, 'Time and the Ocean and some guiding star and High Cabal have made us what we are'."

Prouty further states: "This was a most memorable scene and a revelation of reality that is infrequent, at best. If for the great Winston Churchill, there is a 'High Cabal' that has made us what we are, our definition is complete. Who could know better than Churchill himself during the darkest days of World War II, that there exists, beyond doubt, an international High Cabal? This was true then. It is true today, especially in these times of the One World Order. This all-powerful group has remained superior because it had learned the value of anonymity." This "High Cabal" is the "One World Cabal" of today, also called the elite by various writers.

The High Cabal and What They Control

The elite owns the media, banks, defence and oil industry. In his book *Who's Who of the Elite* Robert Gaylon Ross Sr. states: "It is my opinion that they own the US military, NATO, the Secret Service, the CIA, the Supreme Court, and many of the lower courts. They appear to control, either directly or indirectly, most of the state, county, and local law enforcement agencies."

The elite is intent on conquering the world through the use of the abilities of the people of the United States. It was as far

back as 1774 that Amschel Mayer Rothschild stated at a gathering of the twelve richest men of Prussia in Frankfurt: “Wars should be directed so that the nations on both sides should be further in our debt.” He further enunciated at the same meeting: “Panics and financial depressions would ultimately result in World Government, a new order of one world government.”

The elite owns numerous “think tanks” that work for expanding, consolidating and perpetuating its hold on the globe. The Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Bilderberg Group, the Trilateral Commission, and many other similar organisations are all funded by the elite and work for it. These think tanks publish journals, such as *Foreign Affairs*, in which these imperialist and anti-mankind ideas are edified as publications, and then, if need be, expanded in the form of books that are given wide publicity.

Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger et al, as well as the neo-con “thinkers,” owe their positions and good living standards to the largesse of the elite. This is an important point that must be kept in full view at all times. These thinkers and writers are on the payroll of the elite and work for them. In case someone has any doubts about such a statement, it might help to read the following quotes from Professor Peter Dale Scott’s comprehensively researched book *The Road to 9/11 – Wealth, Empire, and the Future of America* (University of California Press, 2007):

...Bundy’s Harvard protégé Kissinger was named to be national security adviser after having chaired an important “study group” at the Council on Foreign Relations. As a former assistant to Nelson Rockefeller, Kissinger had been paid by Rockefeller to write a book on limited warfare for the CFR. He had also campaigned hard in Rockefeller’s losing campaign for the Presidential nomination in 1968. Thus Rockefeller and the CFR might have been excluded from control of the Republican Party, but not from the Republican White House. (Page 22)

The following quote from page 38 of the book is also very revealing:

The Kissinger-Rockefeller relationship was complex and certainly intense. As investigative reporter Jim Hougan wrote: “Kissinger, married to a former Rockefeller aide, owner of a Georgetown mansion whose purchase was enabled only by Rockefeller gifts and loans, was always a protégé of his patron Nelson Rockefeller, even when he wasn’t directly employed by him.”

Professor Scott adds:

Nixon’s and Kissinger’s arrival in the White House in 1969 coincided with David Rockefeller’s becoming CEO of Chase Manhattan Bank. The Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy of detente was highly congruous with Rockefeller’s push to internationalise Chase Manhattan banking operations. Thus in 1973 Chase Manhattan became the first American bank to open an office in Moscow. A few months later, thanks to an invitation arranged by Kissinger, Rockefeller became the first US banker to talk with Chinese Communist leaders in Beijing.

How They Manipulate Public Opinion

In addition to these strategic “think tanks” the elite has set up a chain of research institutes devoted to manipulating public opinion in a manner the elite desires. As pointed out by John Coleman in his eye opening book *The Tavistock Institute on Human Relations – Shaping the Moral, Spiritual, Cultural, Political and Economic Decline of the United States of America*, it was in 1913 that an institute was established at Wellington House, London for manipulation of public opinion. According to Coleman:

The modern science of mass manipulation was born at Wellington House London, the lusty infant being midwifed by Lord Northcliffe and Lord Rothmere. The British monarchy, Lord Rothschild, and the Rockefellers were responsible for funding the venture... the purpose of those at Wellington House was to effect a change in the opinions of British people who were adamantly opposed to war with Germany, a formidable task that was accomplished by “opinion making” through polling. The staff consisted of Arnold Toynbee, a future director of studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA), Lord

Northcliffe, and the Americans, Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays. Lord Northcliffe was related to the Rothschilds through marriage.

Bernays was a nephew of Sigmund Freud, a fact never mentioned, and developed the technique of “*engineering consent*.” When Sigmund Freud moved to Britain he also, secretly, became associated with this institute through the Tavistock Institute. According to Coleman, Bernays “pioneered the use of psychology and other social sciences to shape and form public opinion so that the public thought such manufactured opinions were their own.”

The Tavistock Institute has a 6 billion dollar fund and 400 subsidiary organisations are under its control along with 3,000 think tanks, mostly in the USA. The Stanford Research Institute, the Hoover Institute, the Aspen Institute of Colorado, and many others, devoted to manipulation of US as well as global public opinion, are Tavistock offshoots. This helps explain why the US public, by and large, is so mesmerised as to be unable to see things clearly and to react.

Bilderberg researcher Daniel Estulin quotes from Mary Scobey’s book *To Nurture Humanness* a statement attributed to Professor Raymond Houghton, that the CFR has been clear for a very long time that “absolute behaviour control is imminent... without mankind’s self realisation that a crisis is at hand.”

Also keep in mind that currently 80% of US electronic and print media is owned by only six large corporations. This development has taken place in the past two decades. These corporations are elite owned. It is almost impossible for anyone who is acquainted with what is going on at the global level to watch, even for a few minutes, the distortions, lies and fabrications, incessantly pouring out of this media, a propaganda and brainwashing organ of the elite.

Once your picture is clear it is also easy to notice the criminal silence of the media on crimes being perpetrated against humanity at the behest of the elite. How many people know that the cancer rates in Fallujah, Iraq are *higher* than those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki because of the use of depleted uranium, and maybe other secret nuclear devices, by US forces? Fallujah was punished for its heroic resistance against the American forces.

The Importance of Eurasia

Why is the US in Central Asia? In order to understand this, one has to look at the writings of the stooges of the elite – Brzezinski, Kissinger, Samuel P Huntington, and their likes. It is important to note that members of these elite paid think tanks publish books as part of a strategy to give respectability to subsequent illegal, immoral and predatory actions that are to be taken at the behest of the elite. The views are not necessarily their own – they are the views of the think tanks. These stooges formulate and pronounce policies and plans at the behest of their masters, through bodies like the Council on Foreign Relations, Bilderberg Group, etc.

In his infinitely arrogant book *The Grand Chessboard*, published in 1997, Brzezinski spelled out the philosophy behind the current US military eruption. He starts by quoting the well-known views of the British geographer Sir Halford J Mackinder (1861–1947), another worker for the elite. Mackinder was a member of the ‘Coefficients Dining Club’ established by members of the Fabian Society in 1902. The continuity of the policies of the elite is indicated by the fact Brzezinski starts from Mackinder’s thesis first propounded in 1904: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: who commands the World-Island commands the world.”

Brzezinski argues that for the first time in human history a non-Eurasian power has become preeminent and it must hold sway over the Eurasian continent if it is to remain the preeminent global power: “For America the chief geopolitical prize is Eurasia... About 75 percent of the world’s people live in Eurasia... Eurasia accounts for about 60 percent of the world’s GNP and about three fourths of the world’s known energy resources.”

It is not just the geostrategic location of this region – it is also its wealth, “both in its enterprises and beneath its soil,” that holds such attraction for the elite whose greed for money, and lust for power, remain insatiable, as if there was a sickness afflicting it.

Brzezinski writes: “But it is on the globe’s most important playing field – Eurasia – that a potential rival to America might

at some point arise. This focusing on the key players and properly assessing the terrain has to be a point of departure for the formulation of American geostrategy for the long-term management of America's Eurasian geopolitical interests."

These lines were published in 1997. Millions of people have died in the past two decades and millions have been rendered homeless in this region but it remains a "playing" field for Brzezinski and his likes! In his book Brzezinski has drawn two very interesting maps – one of these has the caption *The Global Zone of Percolating Violence* (page 53) and the other (page 124) is captioned *The Eurasian Balkans*. The first of these encircles a region which includes the following countries: Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, all Central Asian states, Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of Russia as well as India. The second one has two circles, an inner circle and a wider circle – the outer circle encloses the same countries as in the first map but the inner circle covers Iran, Afghanistan, eastern Turkey and the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia.

"This huge region, torn by volatile hatreds and surrounded by competing powerful neighbours, is likely to be a major battlefield..." writes Brzezinski. He further writes: "A possible challenge to American primacy from Islamic fundamentalism could be part of the problem of this unstable region." These lines were written at a time when this kind of fundamentalism was not a problem – subsequently the US manipulated things and chose to make it one by its provocative and deceptive tactics. According to its strategic thinkers, the US might face a serious challenge from a coalition of China, Russia and Iran and must do whatever it can to prevent such a coalition from forming.

For Brzezinski, "terrorism" – a Tavistock-type concept – is just a well planned and well thought out strategy, a lie and a deception, to provide cover for a military presence in the Central Eurasian region and elsewhere. It is being used to keep the US public in a state of fear, to keep Russia in a state of insecurity about further breakup (the US has trained and supported Chechen fighters, "terrorists," throughout) and to justify presence of US troops in and around Central Asia.

The Concocted War on Terrorism

Terrorism provides justification for transforming the United States into a police state. According to the *Washington Post* of 20 & 21 December 2010, the US now has 4,058 anti-terrorism organisations! These are certainly not meant for those so-called terrorists who operate in Central Asia – the number far exceeds the number of so-called terrorists in the entire world. Unbridled domestic spying by US agencies is now a fact of life and the US public, as always, has accepted this because of the collusion of media and Tavistock type institutes owned by the elite.

The US historian Howard Zinn puts it very well: "The so-called war on terrorism is not only a war against innocent people in other countries, but also a war on the people of the United States: a war on our liberties, a war on our standard of living. The wealth of the country is being stolen from the people and handed over to the superrich. The lives of our young are being stolen. And the thieves are in the White House." Actually the thieves control the White House and have been doing so for a very long time.

In his outstanding book *Crossing the Rubicon*, Michael Ruppert points out that much of the violence in the Central Asian region as well as in Pakistan, which has been encircled in two maps in Brzezinski's book, was "initiated by the US proxies." "Given that these maps were published a full four years before the first plane hit the World Trade Centre, they would fall in a category of evidence I learned about at LAPD [Los Angeles Police Department]. We called them 'clues'." This means that the eruption of US militarism after 9/11, and the event itself, were part of a pre-planned and coherent strategy of global domination in which the people of the US were also "conquered" through totalitarian legislation carried out in the wake of 9/11.

As Brzezinski puts it:

America is too democratic at home to be autocratic abroad. This limits the use of America's power, especially its capacity for military intimidation. Never before has a popular democracy attained international supremacy. But the pursuit of power is not a goal that commands popular passion, except in conditions of a sudden threat or challenge to the public's sense of domestic well-being... The economic self-denial (that is, defence spending) and the human sacrifice (casualties even among professional soldiers) required in the effort are uncongenial to democratic instincts. Democracy is inimical to

imperial mobilisation.

Certainly post 9/11 legislation, the extraordinary expansion of agencies and surveillance of the US public is a cause of great satisfaction for the elite – the US can hardly be called a democracy now. As reported by the *Washington Post*, the National Security Agency intercepts over 1.7 billion emails, phone calls and other communications every day and stores them. No wonder Bush called 9/11 “a great opportunity” and Rumsfeld saw it analogous to World War II to “refashion the world.”

In order to achieve the objectives of the elite, the US destroyed Yugoslavia while Russia stood by mesmerised and impotent, carried out regime changes in Central Asia, set up military bases in East Europe and Central Asia, and staged highly provocative military exercises testing Russia’s and China’s will. It set up a military base in Kyrgyzstan that has a 500 mile or so border with China. When the Chinese protested recent naval exercises with South Korea were too close to Chinese territory, a US spokesman responded: “Those determinations are made by us, and us alone... Where we exercise, when we exercise, with whom and how, with what assets and so forth are determinations that are made by the United States Navy, by the Department of Defence, by the United States government.” As journalist Rick Rozoff notes: “There is no way such confrontational, arrogant and vulgar language was not understood at its proper value in Beijing.”

The US has acquired bases in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, and the Czech Republic – and set up the largest military base ever built in the region, Camp Bondsteel, in Kosovo. According to a report in the Russian *Kommersant* newspaper on 3 March 2011, a four-phase plan for deployment of a US missile system in Europe is to be fully implemented by the end of 2020. The US is also busy setting up bilateral military ties in Russia’s backyard with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and is pursuing the goal of a “Greater Central Asia” from Afghanistan right up to the Middle East, a great corridor from where the oil, gas, and great mineral wealth of this region will flow to the coffers of the US elite, at bloody expense to the local people.

As remarked by the Indian career diplomat M.K. Bhadrakumar: “The time is not far off before they begin to sense that ‘the war on terror’ is providing a convenient rubric under which the US is incrementally securing for itself a permanent abode in the highlands of Hindu Kush, the Pamirs, Central Asian steppes and the Caucasus that form the strategic hub overlooking Russia, China, India and Iran.” The scene for a great war involving the great powers of the time – US, Russia and China – is now set, by design of the elite. It is just a matter of time.

Time and again the US elite has taken its good people into great wars through documented and proven deceptions – the sinking of the Lusitania during World War I, Pearl Harbour in World War II, and so on. The elite considers us “human garbage” – a term first used by the French in Indo-China. It is also generating a good deal of “human garbage” in the US. A World Bank report points out that in 2005, 28 million Americans were “insecure” – in 2007 the number had risen to 46 million! One in every five Americans is faced with the possibility of becoming “destitute” – 38 million people receive food coupons!

Michael Ruppert laments:

My country is dead. Its people have surrendered to tyranny and in so doing, they have become tyranny’s primary support group; its base; its defender. Every day they offer their endorsement of tyranny by banking in its banks and spending their borrowed money with the corporations that run it. The great Neocon strategy of George H.W. Bush has triumphed. Convince the America people that they can’t live without the ‘good things’, then sit back and watch as they endorse the progressively more outrageous crimes you commit as you throw them bones with ever less meat on them. All the while lock them into debt. Destroy the middle class, the only political base that need be feared. Make them accept, because of their shared guilt, ever-more repressive police state measures. Do whatever you want.

A global economic system erected on inhuman and predatory values, where a few possess more wealth than the billions of hungry put together, will end, but the end will be painful and bloody. It is a system in which the elite thrives on war and widespread human misery, on death and destruction by design. As Einstein said, “*I do not know how the Third World War will be fought, but I can tell you what they will use in the Fourth – sticks and stones!*”

Prof. Mujahid Kamran is Vice Chancellor, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, and his book *The Grand Deception – Corporate America and Perpetual War* has just been published (April 2011) by Sang e Meel Publications, Lahore, Pakistan.

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William Loren Katz: War? Bloodlust? What’s a Scholar to Do?

In 1897 TR wrote a friend “I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one” -- and carried around a list of six target nations on three continents.

War? Bloodlust? What’s a Scholar to Do?

by William Loren Katz [article link](#)

June 8, 2011 | CommonDreams

The *New York Sunday Times* on November 28, 2010 published noted historian Geoffrey C. Ward’s review of a biography of President Theodore Roosevelt [TR]. His review reveals something distressing about the way some of our scholars gloss over our iconic figures and write history as the U.S. fights multiple wars. A popular war hero, President for seven years, a prominent international figure [awarded the Nobel Peace Prize], arguably the man who built the U.S. overseas empire, TR’s

brash aggressiveness has long made him Mount Rushmore in size and a favorite of school texts. He is always listed among our best and most important leaders.

At one point Ward refers to Roosevelt having “a bloodlust impossible to excuse.” First a fact: In and out of the White House TR wielded enormous power at home and across the globe, and at the moment the U.S. rushed onto the world scene. Question: does not a bloodlust from this high a global perch have huge consequences? Ward simply mentions TR’s bloodlust and then hurries on.

TR was an energetic, impetuous, rarely contained figure. What about his bloodlust? Did he open his heart to war and violence? In 1897 TR wrote a friend “I should welcome almost any war, for I think this country needs one” -- and carried around a list of six target nations on three continents. The next year the U.S. declared war on Spain, and TR at forty rushed to serve -- and did serve heroically as a Rough Rider. Years later he regretted he had not been “seriously wounded in Cuba in some striking and disfiguring way.”

In what ways did TR’s bloodlust impact the world stage? Reviewer Ward does not say, but TR does. “All the great masterful races have been fighting races,” he claimed. To fellow Anglo-Saxons he said, “It is wholly impossible to avoid conflicts with the weaker races,” and added, “The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages.” He urged Anglo Saxon men to embrace war as a form of “spiritual renewal” that would prevent “race suicide” and stimulate “a clear instinct for racial selfishness.” TR as a statesman embraced war as inevitable, justifiable, and politically useful. As an historian TR called “heroic” shocking U.S. Army massacres of innocent Indian villagers. He believed “the only good Indian is a dead Indian” and promoted the genocide of Native Americans.

President during a time when a hundred African Americans were killed by brutal lynch mobs each year, TR said he opposed lynching. He also spoke to Black audiences about lynching and announced the “rapists and criminals” among them “did more harm to their race than any white man can possibly do them.”

During his White House years, TR boasted, “not a shot was fired at any soldier of a hostile nation by any American soldier or sailor.” But when Filipinos demanded the right of self-determination, he ordered a U.S. Army occupation of the Philippines that continued throughout his presidency and beyond . . . and took hundreds of thousands of civilian lives.

During World War I TR’s bloodlust was still kicking. At 60 he rushed to join the Army so he could die gloriously for his country, but was turned down. But when his son Archie was wounded overseas TR and his family raised a toast. TR died two years later peacefully in his bed.

Roosevelt’s bloodlust carried a strong racial bias, a flawed memory, and lived deep in his soul. Like him it became a part of American policy. Confining it to four words is not the whole truth. Nor is it useful as the U.S. fights three Middle Eastern wars and contemplates another invasion.

Americans need to understand our leaders, our history and how to avoid bloodlust-driven policies.

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William Loren Katz is the author of *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* and forty other books. His website is: www.williamlkatz.com

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Tuesday, June 7, 2011

[Paul Rogat Loeb: Glued to The Weather Channel While the World Burns](#)

Glued to The Weather Channel While the World Burns

by Paul Rogat Loeb [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 6, 2011 | CommonDreams | Huffington Post

Following the weather is beginning to feel like revisiting the Biblical plagues. Tornadoes rip through Missouri, Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma--even Massachusetts. A million acres burn in Texas wildfires. The Army Corps of Engineers floods 135,000 acres of farmland and three million acres of bayou country to save Memphis and New Orleans. Earlier in the past year, a 2,000-mile storm dumped near-record snow from Texas to Maine, a fifth of Pakistan flooded, fires made Moscow's air nearly unbreathable, and drought devastated China's wheat crop. You'd think we'd suspect something's grievously wrong.

But media coverage rarely connects the unfolding cataclysms with the global climate change that fuels them. We can't guarantee that any specific disaster is caused by our warming atmosphere. The links are delayed and diffuse. But considered together, the escalating floods, droughts, tornadoes, and hurricanes fit all the predicted models. So do the extreme snowfalls and ice storms, as our heated atmosphere carries more water vapor. So why deem them isolated acts of God--instead of urgent warnings to change our course?

Scientists are more certain than ever, from the National Academy of Science and its counterparts in every other country to such "radical groups" as the American Chemical Society and American Statistical Society. But the media has buried their

voices, giving near-equal "point/counterpoint" credence to a handful of deniers promoted by Exxon, the coal companies and the Koch brothers. Fox News's managing editor even [prohibited any reporting](#) on global climate change that didn't immediately then question the overwhelming scientific consensus. The escalating disasters dominate the news, but stripped of context. We're given no perspective to reflect on their likely root causes.

Meanwhile, leading Republicans who once acknowledged the need to act, [like Tim Pawlenty](#), disavow their previous stands like sinners begging forgiveness. A Tea Party Congress insists that they know better than do all the world's scientists, dismissing decades of meticulous research as Ivory Tower elitism. Even Obama has fallen largely silent, as if he can't afford an honest discussion.

As a result, too many Americans still don't know what to believe. We can't see, smell or taste the core emissions that create climate change. The industrial processes that create the crisis are so familiar we don't even question them, no more than the air that we breathe. And if we're not getting hammered by the weather, the world still seems normal, particularly on a lovely summer day. Plus we're told that in the current economic crisis we can't afford even to think about climate change or any other urgent environmental issue, even though the technologies that provide the necessary alternatives are precisely those our country will need to compete economically. Add in a culture of overload and distraction, and it's easy to retreat into denial or self-defeating resignation. It's as if [half our population](#) was diagnosed with life-threatening but treatable cancer--visited the world's leading medical centers to confirm it--and then decided instead to heed forwarded emails that assure them that they can freely ignore the counsel of the doctors and simply do nothing.

The antidote to denial and the forces that promote it is courage. And as Egypt and Tunisia remind us, courage is contagious. We need to act and speak out in every conceivable way, and demand that our leaders do the same. We need to engage new allies, like religious evangelicals who've recently spoken out to defend "God's creation," from best-selling minister Rick Warren to highly conservative organizations like the Christian Coalition. We need to work with labor activists who link this ultimate issue with the renewal of American jobs. A recent [BlueGreen Alliance](#) conference, for instance, brought together leaders of major unions like the United Steel Workers, SEIU, Communications Workers of America, United Auto Workers, Laborers' International, and American Federation of Teachers, with environmental groups like the Sierra Club, National Resource Defense Council, National Wildlife Federation and Union of Concerned Scientists, all speaking about the need to invest in an economy where both ordinary workers and the planet are respected. We need to join with these allies and others to voice our outrage at those risking our common future for greed. We need to find creative ways to do this until America's

political climate comes to grips with the changing climate of the earth. Here's hoping the mounting disasters will finally teach us to turn off The Weather Channel and begin taking action.

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Paul Rogat Loeb is the author of [Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in Challenging Times](#), whose wholly updated new edition will be released March 30, and [The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear](#), named the #3 political book of 2004 by the History Channel and the American Book Association. His previous books include [Generation at the Crossroads: Apathy and Action on the American Campus](#). See www.paulloeb.org To receive his articles directly email sympa@lists.onenw.org with the subject line: subscribe paulloeb-articles.

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[History Is Knocking: Stop the Machine! Create a New World!](#)

History Is Knocking: Stop the Machine! Create a New World!

by Kevin Zeese, Margaret Flowers, Tarak Kauff, Elaine Brower [article link](#)

June 7, 2011 | CommonDreams

There comes a time when efforts to avoid the truth begin to fail, when one can no longer go about daily life and pretend that all is okay. If you are like most of us, you are experiencing this.

There comes a time when one can no longer shut out the atrocities of U.S. foreign and military policy: trade agreements that destroy farming; mass unemployment; especially among communities of color; illegal detention and torture; increasing drone attacks resulting in mass civilian deaths; and once again a President who lies the United States into another war for oil and bankers.

A time comes when one can no longer close one's eyes to the atrocities of a U.S. domestic policy that steals from the people to add to the already hideously bursting pockets of the wealthy, that kicks people out of their homes, denies needed medical treatment and drives families into bankruptcy so that CEOs can dine on gold-lined plates in their personal jets as they travel from gated mansions to leather seats in penthouse offices.

A time comes when one cannot help but realize that the path is unsustainable and one must make a choice. History is knocking, and each of us must choose how we will answer. What do you want to say you did when history was at your door?

History is not a fairy tale you read to your children at night. It is not something someone else did in another place. History is right here and right now, in front of you. It happens before you realize what is going on. There are events that give hints, but nobody knows when the dam will burst and the flood that gushes forth will wipe clean what has gone before and create a new reality.

When the tipping point is reached, it seems at once both unexpected and completely obvious. We are nearing that tipping point in the United States. We have witnessed the Arab Spring and the blossoming of the European Summer. We ask ourselves if now we will experience the American Autumn.

People in America see that corporate power controls the political process and the media. The Forces of Greed steal our treasure and squander it on militarism and needless wars for empire. Forces of Greed render our White House, Congress and Supreme Court dysfunctional so that the denizens of these bodies regurgitate what their corporate paymasters feed them.

Our country faces crises on every front: the economy, education, jobs, the environment, health care, housing, the wealth divide, an empire stretched too thin and ready to shred. None of these crises has to exist. Just and sustainable solutions are available and known. What stands in the way of all these solutions is concentrated corporate power.

Corporatism is behind the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Pakistan in which thousands, including our own soldiers, but mostly innocent civilians—men, women and children—are maimed and killed.

Corporatism ignores majority support for improved Medicare for all and instead hands billions to the medical-industrial complex while tens of thousands suffer and die from preventable causes each year.

Corporatism prevents effective regulation of the finance industry, stands in the way of a more sustainable energy economy, resists real job creation and is at the root of the foreclosure crisis, while more families find themselves on the street with nothing.

Corporatism blocks effective action to decrease the known causes of climate chaos while the Arctic Cap melts and tornadoes rampage; some face record droughts while others face high-level flooding.

Corporatism exploits human beings and the planet for profit.

Somehow we need to realize that the situation has gone beyond critical and there is no alternative but to act and resist with resolve. Every day the runaway corporate machine moves closer to the precipice; every day, thousands more children needlessly starve or die from wars or disease. Every day, the earth itself is being raped, and all this death and destruction, for what? Bloody offerings at the altar of the god of profit! It has to stop and people of conscience and courage are the ones

with the collective power to stop it.

None of us can do this alone. Even the organizations that advocate just and sustainable solutions cannot do it alone. Corporate power is tremendous. It misinforms, frightens and divides us. Our strength is in unity, in the connection that we share: our desire for a world in which humans can trust each other, can work together to create real solutions instead of hating and killing each other.

We are seeing the beauty of this unity in other parts of the world and at home. Across the country there is evidence of citizen revolt. Most only see the big demonstrations—Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, the immigrant marches—but in fact, people in America are consistently in protest against austerity budgets, big business tax avoidance, rising tuition, cuts to education, foreclosures, insurance-based health care and the ongoing wars. On issue after issue there is evidence of people in revolt.

Now is the time to join together and unite our struggles in sustained acts of nonviolent resistance. Democracy literally means people power. Concentrated corporate capital and influence has changed the United States into a faux democracy where Americans only get to choose from two corporate-approved candidates, funded by millions in corporate donations.

The normal tools of democracy no longer work.

October 6 is the 10th anniversary of the Afghanistan invasion, and the beginning of the new federal budget year—an austerity budget for everything except for war and the corporate security state. On this day, we are calling for sustained and nonviolent mass resistance in Washington, D.C. The action, Stop the Machine! Create a New World!, portends an American Tahrir Square at Freedom Plaza between the White House and Congress, a block away from the National Press Club and a few blocks from the Chamber of Commerce and K Street, the stomping ground of corporate lobbyists.

An impressive array of people have already signed on. Among them: Ann Wright, Baldemar Velasquez, Ben Manski, Brian Becker, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Chris Hedges, Cornel West, David Swanson, Debra Sweet, Diane Wilson, Glen Ford, Jane Hamsher, Jodie Evans, Leah Bolger, Medea Benjamin, Mike Ferner, Larry Pinkney, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Rosa Clemente, Steffie Woolhandler, Ted Rall, The YES Men. (Google them, if you don't know them, each is an impressive leader.)

We know however, that it is not leaders who make change, but people united who insist on change that will succeed!

We are at a turning point. History is knocking. It is time for each of us to decide whether we can remain silent and thus allow the destruction of our planet or join in solidarity to create the future we envision of peace, justice and equality.

Here are three steps you can take right now to create the momentum that leads to a historical breakthrough:

1. Sign the pledge at www.October2011.org and say why you're coming.
2. Spread the word by forwarding this newsletter to everyone you know, posting www.October2011.org on your Facebook page and sending it out on Twitter.
3. Reach out to organizations that should be involved and tell them to join the campaign.

It is time to turn the Arab Spring into the American Autumn and begin a movement to remove corporate power and militarism from control of our government.

Ending corporatism and militarism is the transformative issue of our era.

You can be part of a great moment in history—don't miss the opportunity, answer the call.

Questions? Info@October2011.org.

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Monday, June 6, 2011

[Ninan Koshy: The State Of The Empire](#)

The State Of The Empire

Some Reflections on the Geopolitical Situation

by Ninan Koshy [article link](#)

June 05 2011 | Information Clearing House | Peace For Life

My attempt is to give or rather get an overview of the geopolitical situation by an examination of the state of the Empire today. This is because the projects and policies of US Empire largely determine developments in international politics today.

Continuing Imperial Geo-strategy

If anybody had hopes that the replacement of a Republican President by a Democratic President would reform, if not begin to dismantle the Empire, their hopes have been totally belied. The continuation of the Bush era policies, military doctrines and strategies by President Obama, is deeply disquieting but not surprising. In the wake of the Bush administration's disastrous neoconservative ideologies, the Obama administration initially appeared to be seeking to realize the liberal international and diplomatic way of relating to the world. But soon it was clear that US is going to be an aggressive imperial power no matter whom it elects as president, and that what is called 'neo-conservatism' is merely an extreme version of normal American assumption of supremacy, one that explicitly promotes and heightens US's routine practice of empire. Thus there is no fundamental break in foreign policy between the Bush and Obama regimes. The strategic goals and the imperatives of the US imperium remain the same as do principal theatres and means of operation.

One noticeable aspect of continuity is with reference to views on war and peace. If Obama was the Commander-in-Chief of two wars when he received the Nobel Peace Prize for Peace, he can now claim to be C-in-C of one more, Libya, though it is a war in denial. In fact a close analysis of the new Libyan adventure of the USA and NATO brings out clearly the continuing imperial geo-strategy.

The Discourse on War and Peace

First, on war and peace. The scrutiny of the term 'just peace' is especially important in the context of the confusion deliberately created by the prevailing discourse on war and peace, a discourse reflecting the hegemonic definitional power of the USA. Claiming 'victory' in the war against Iraq while speaking to the workers of the Boeing factory, President Bush declared, "We are redefining war on our terms". He added, "The manufacturers of weapons are the peacemakers".

The confusion was evident in President Obama's speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize. He had just dispatched additionally 30,000 troops to Afghanistan. He was obviously on the horns of a dilemma. But he came out in favour of war, not peace. He said, "There will be times when nations will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justifiable." Claims about necessity and moral justification of any war are problematic, especially when such claims are made by the rulers who wage seemingly endless wars. The distance from the necessity of war to the inevitability of war was considerably shortened by the new military doctrines and strategies of the USA under President Bush.

Obama added in his Oslo speech, "Yes, the instruments of war do have a role in preserving peace", uncomfortably reminding us of Bush's statement to the Boeing workers. In the speech Obama spoke of the "biggest and strongest military alliance in the world", the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). "Peace requires responsibility. Peace entails sacrifice. That is why NATO continues to be indispensable." Obama was glorifying a military alliance which has the most aggressive strategic doctrine. He was only following the path of his predecessor Bush who had declared that "Pentagon is the biggest force for freedom in the world." The occupation of Afghanistan by the USA and NATO still continues. In Iraq there will be continued US military presence and a number of bases. Even when imperial wars end, imperial bases continue.

In his speech at the National Defense University in Washington, trying to justify military action against Libya, President Obama said, "I will never hesitate to use our military swiftly, decisively and unilaterally when necessary to defend our people, our homeland, our allies and our core interests." He added other occasions for intervention "when our safety is not directly threatened but our interests and our allies' are". In this secondary list he lumped everything from "preventing genocide" to "ensuring regional security" and "maintaining the flow of commerce". Yes, Obama will take military action to maintain "the flow of commerce". This was a reiteration of the Bush doctrine of preemption and preventive wars. If Bush thought of preventive wars even in case of presumed future, potential threats to the USA, Obama seems to believe that wars are necessary even when there is no threat to the USA now or in the future. The Libyan action of the Western powers is a war, albeit an undeclared one.

The Bush administration had redefined war objectives in terms of "changing the regime of an adversary state" and "occupying foreign territory until U.S. strategic objectives are met". The United States and the NATO have manipulated and interpreted the Security Council resolution on Libya to suit their imperial objectives.

The Military Action against Libya and International Law

On 17th March 2011, the UN Security Council adopted a binding resolution (1973) with the stated goal to protect civilians in the domestic conflict in Libya. Operative paras 4 and 8 of the resolution authorize all member states individually or through regional organizations or arrangements to "undertake all necessary measures" for the protection of civilians and for the enforcement of a so-called no fly zone. To 'authorize' states to "use all necessary measures" in the enforcement of a legally binding resolution is an invitation to an arbitrary and arrogant exercise of power and makes the commitment of the UN to the international rule of law void of any meaning. The fact that the Security Council adopted the same approach, earlier in resolution 678 dealing with the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, in 1990 does not justify the present action in the context of the domestic conflict in Libya. "All necessary measures" have come to mean solely military action excluding the range of possibilities including mediation, negotiation and diplomacy.

While the objective of the Security Council resolution is clearly stated as protecting the civilians, the Western powers have made clear that their real political goal is regime change - ousting Muammar Gaddafi. Ironically by stating that Gaddafi has lost legitimacy, Western leaders are dramatically narrowing the space for a more peaceful removal of the Libyan leader. The one thing that the Europeans share is a seeming lack of exit strategy from a military action marketed as a no-fly zone to the goal of a regime change mirroring the Afghan and Iraq campaigns. Can regime change be sustained without occupation? Occupation is the highest form of dictatorship which Washington calls democracy.

As the military preparations of the size and magnitude employed in Libya are never improvised there is reason to believe, that the war on Libya as well as the armed insurrection against the regime were planned months prior to the Arab uprising. That is why the Libyan war has to be treated separately.

In Libya the Western powers have intervened in an internal conflict and taken sides in a civil war. There has been no threat to international peace and security from Libya.

Geo-strategic Significance

The name “Operation Odyssey Dawn” is very revealing. It identifies the strategic interest and direction of the war against Libya. The Odyssey is an ancient Greek epic by the poet Homer which recounts the voyage and trials of its hero. The main theme here is ‘return home’. The US and other imperialist powers are on their own odyssey of ‘return’ to Africa. That explains why the initiative was taken by Britain and France, the former colonial powers in Africa.

Events in Libya are not exclusive to the military theatre. There is a geopolitical and economic chess match at play between the West and China in a battle for Africa and with it the largest basket of national resources on earth. The US has already outlined its strategic agenda through the formation of the AFRICOM, a subset of the infamous neoconservative Project for a New American Empire (PMAC). Central to America’s strategic goals is to confront the increasing Chinese influence on the continent. Beijing has assessed that the Anglo-French-American bombing of Libya, apart from its myriad geopolitical implications, has risked millions of dollars to Chinese investments.

Africa Command represents a vital and crucial link for the global military deployment of the USA. Libya is one of the five African countries that have not been integrated into, which is to say subordinated to, the Africa Command. Others are Sudan, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe and Eritrea.

There are observers who note that the Mediterranean Sea is emerging as the main battlefield in the world superseding the Afghan-Pak war theatre and thus an important zone of the Empire. Libya is the only African nation bordering the Mediterranean which is not a member of NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue Programme. The Mediterranean has been historically one of the most important –if not the most important – strategically crucial sea and the only one whose waves lap the shores of three continents. The defeat and conquest of Libya, directly or by proxy, would secure a key outpost for the Pentagon and NATO on the Mediterranean Sea.

The NATO’s entry into Africa is a development that has serious consequences. Originally meant as an alliance to preserve peace and stability along the frontline between the now defunct USSR and the US-European alliance, NATO has now become the major arm of the Empire. It entered Asia through Afghanistan under a dubious authorization by the UN for the International Security Assistance Force. The use of NATO in these regions is further proof that its Cold War function is still active, the old chess pieces are still in place and its Western directors are not hiding the fact at all. The NATO master plan is to rule the Mediterranean as a NATO lake. Under these ‘optics’ (Pentagon speak) the Mediterranean is infinitely more important as a theatre than Afghanistan. NATO is essentially Pentagon rule over its European minions. In fact it is the claim by the US that it has the right to intervene militarily in any part of the world that buttresses the new mandate assumed by the NATO.

It should be noted that only a few members of the NATO are directly involved in the Libya campaign. An important ally of the USA and a prominent member of NATO Germany abstained in the voting in the Security Council resolution and do not participate in the campaign. The Bush doctrine of the “coalition of the willing” still prevails. The key point is that while Libya allows the biggest US-European multinational to plunder its oil wealth it did not become a strategic military asset of the Empire. The driving force of US empire building is military and not economic.

The Nuclear Implications

The Libyan war raises important questions about US’s nuclear posture as well as nuclear disarmament. A critical issue that has been raised is whether the recent test of a B61-11 by the USA is ‘routine’ or was it envisaged by the Pentagon directly or indirectly in support of Operation Odyssey Dawn implying the possible development of mini-nukes at some future stage of the Libya bombing campaign. In the Nuclear Posture Review of 2002, the Pentagon mentioned the need to test small “usable” nuclear weapons. Low yield nuclear weapons are presented as a means to building peace and preventing

“collateral damage”.

The decision to use low-yield nuclear weapons (e.g. against Libya) no longer needs the authorization or even the permission of the Commander in Chief, the President. It is strictly a military decision. The new doctrine says that Command Control and Coordination (CCC) regarding the use of nuclear weapons should be ‘flexible’ allowing geographic combat commanders to decide if and when to use nuclear weapons.

The Libyan War raises sharp questions about the nuclear disarmament policy of the United States. North Korea’s foreign ministry has issued a statement condemning the Libyan invasion, claiming that the attack is a likely scenario when a country decides to give up its nuclear weapons. (Libya gave up its nuclear program in 2003). American, British and French forces are now attacking Gaddafi’s military. And uncomfortable questions linger. Would NATO be enforcing a no-fly zone if Gaddafi had not dismantled Libya’s nuclear program?. Does the current military action against Libya send a signal to “rogue states” like Iran that security gained by de-nuclearisation is anything but? The Iranian and North Korean leadership use the nuclear weapon program both to bolster its domestic political prestige and to deter an attack from the US.

It is ironic that just under eight years ago, Gaddafi specifically engaged in an action clearly intended to forestall US military action against his regime and despite that he is now under military attack from US and its allies. The impression may gain currency that the US lures or coerces nations into nuclear disarmament and then attack them.

The Arab Uprising

The Arab uprising is a genuine expression of a long-standing desire for greater freedoms as well as economic justice denied by generally autocratic regimes. The current evolving situation raises several important questions. What are the common factors if any behind the movement? What are the possible outcomes of the demand for political reforms? How will this ongoing struggle impact the outside world? How will this affect the struggle of the Palestinian people for independent statehood? Answers to these questions are complex and difficult given the diversity in history, culture and politics of the Arab world.

However certain observations can be made. These revolts have immediately performed a kind of ideological house-cleaning sweeping away the racist conceptions of a clash of civilizations that consign Arab policies to the past. The struggles for freedom and democracy and the way in which they are being waged have shattered the stereotypes and wrong images of the Arabs created by the West. The Arab street is vibrant and peaceful even when the repression continues with state terrorism.

In the last quarter of a century and more the political developments in the region have been largely shaped by the imperialist policies of the USA especially with a view to ensuring the “security” of Israel. The US has always followed a policy of double standard in the region as it has done in other parts of the world. In response to the Arab revolt too, this double standard. Washington has no difficulty with autocratic regimes as long as they are pro-American. Regime change means installing “friendly” regimes.

An understanding of U.S. imperial policy in the Middle East requires an analysis which contains three factors:

- (i) The power and influence of Israel and related power configuration on US political institutions.
- (ii) The capacity of the US empire to construct and instrumentalize Middle East client states and regimes
- (iii) An alliance with rightwing regimes and rulers to provide military bases, intelligence and political backing for the colonial occupation of Iraq and economic sanctions and if necessary war against Iran.

All these are under serious challenge by the Arab uprising.

The United States is intervening in the Arab uprising with a view to manipulating and fashioning it to suit its interests and promote those of Israel. Robert Gates on April 19 has identified three regimes only which denies freedom and human rights – Iran, Syria and Libya. They are prominent in the US list of countries for military action. It has started with Libya. In Gates' view other countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Yemen etc are model democracies with freedom and human rights

Since all the other countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Jordan are all friendly to the US and keep US interests any revolt has to be suppressed; hence, the American approval for the cruel repression in Bahrain with the active involvement of the Saudi military. The implications of any military action against Syria are quite grave but such action cannot be ruled out.

One of the most salutary effects of the Arab uprising is the agreement between Fatah and Hamas for Palestinian unity. They have agreed to reconcile in a surprise Egyptian-brokered accord –also showing a changing role of Egypt - that enraged Israel and left US officials struggling to maintain their influence over Middle East peace negotiations. The power sharing deal which was hammered out includes the formation of a national unity government and a timetable for general election. As a Fatah leader stated, “At this stage we have the best weapon to face the occupation. This weapon is our national unity.” It is already clear that Israel will use any means including military action to subvert Palestinian unity.

It is quite possible that Palestinian Authority (PA) had already made a strategic decision to move away from the United States and put its fate more squarely in the hands of the UN. They might have assessed a declining influence of the US in the Middle East combined with attempts for increasing support for the beleaguered Israel.

Parallel to the apparent decline in American influence, many states have recently intensified their political support for a Palestinian state and criticism of Israel. More than half a dozen Latin American countries have recognized Palestine explicitly while the governments of France, Spain and Ireland have upgraded Palestinian diplomatic delegations in their countries with other European countries expected to follow suit. The PA expects recognition by the vast majority of member-states of the UN when it declares unilateral independence.

The Empire's “Global Sovereignty”

The commando action by the Obama administration in Pakistan in which Osama bin Laden was killed, raises many important questions but underlines the fact that the President is following faithfully the imperial doctrine about ‘global sovereignty’ and ‘freedom of action’ of the USA. Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Salman Bashie said that the US forces may have breached his country's sovereignty. “This violation of sovereignty and the modalities for combating terrorism raises certain legal and moral issues which fall in the domain of the international community”.

The explanation is found in The National Defense Strategy of the United States, March 2005. One of the main strategic objectives listed in the document is to “secure strategic access and retain global freedom of action.”

The Strategy suggests that Washington will not be reluctant to send its forces into other states that, in its opinion, “do not exercise their sovereignty responsibly” or that “use the principle of sovereignty as a shield behind which they claim to be free to engage in activities that pose enormous threats to their citizens or the rest of the international community”.

This raises important questions about sovereignty. The strategy of preventive war is closely bound up with the new vitality of the “hegemonic international law nihilism” (Norman Peach) that is exhibited by the US administration. It is rooted in the idea that the US possesses global sovereignty and all national sovereignties are relative to it. “This notion of global sovereignty means that the USA will lay down international rules (e.g. as alliances or formation of blocs) determine what constitutes a crisis (a state of emergency), distinguish between friend and foe and make the resulting decision on the use of force. Only the USA is competent to use force anywhere in the world. This is one of the pillars of the new grand strategy, which is exemplified above all else by the concept of an exclusive right to preventive military action all over the world. Commitments to international alliances, and in particular to the United Nations are rejected as constituting a restriction of

the USA's freedom to act.” (Rainer Rilling)

Obama's assertion that the Osama bin Laden-type operations will continue is a declaration that the global empire will retain 'global sovereignty' and 'global freedom of action' by military might.

Countervailing Powers

Despite the utopian perspectives by the ranks of neo-liberal globalist disciples, cadres of nations and trading alliances have been formed since 2000. BRICS, MENA and other emerging blocs are challenging the preeminence of the traditional Anglo-American and European dominance over the global market and cultural monopolies. Oil, gas, uranium and water feature prominently in this realignment of the global chessboard and with each additional theatre comes the risk of multi-regional wars. The imperium is under attack not only by adversaries but also by those who no longer accept the US economic and ideological models, especially in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007.

The global recession that began in the US in 2007 was perhaps the most significant event impacting the geopolitical environment over the last several years. It has challenged the present international structures and unsustainable corporate power. Moreover the geopolitical framework has changed, questioning the supremacy of the USA which however maintains its imperial character by its unrivalled military power.

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - may offer a countervailing power to some features of the Empire but not in military terms. The Sanya declaration –the outcome document of the recent BRICS summit in China– demonstrated five of the largest emerging economies now have “a broad consensus” of views not only on key international economic and financial issues but also on certain international political issues. They demanded reform of financial institutions of global governance enabling developing nations to have a greater say in them.

On the political side two key issues deserve mention. BRICS has voiced support for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council. On the Libyan crisis however, BRICS has managed to create an ample air of ambivalence. Prior to the Sanya summit four countries abstained on the Security Council resolution, thereby providing a cover for Western intervention, and one (South Africa) in fact supported the resolution. At the summit, however, all five member-states expressed support for avoiding the use of force and ensuring respect for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a country. Earlier Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of Russia termed Operation Odyssey Dawn, a medieval call to crusade and the Security Council resolution “defective and flawed”. Whether the BRICS will emerge as a counter-weight to the USA, especially with regard to its imperial pursuits is doubtful at present.

The current geopolitical situation poses many challenges to peace movements like Peace for Life. These challenges define our tasks. Let me indicate some of them.

- Recover and recapture the full meaning of peace and critique formulations that do not reflect it
- Expose and contest the continuation of imperial policies by the Obama regime,
- Condemn violations of sovereignty and imperial military interventions,
- Affirm the aspirations of the Arab people for freedom and human dignity,
- Continue to be in solidarity with the Palestinian people and actively support them as they enter a new stage in their struggle for statehood.

Ninan Koshy is a noted political thinker, foreign affairs expert, theologian and social analyst. Former director of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

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Sunday, June 5, 2011

[David Schwartz: The Rise of the Second-String Psychopaths](#)

The Rise of the Second-String Psychopaths

by David Schwartz [article link](#)

June 5, 2011 | CommonDreams

The great writer Kurt Vonnegut titled his final book [A Man without a Country](#). He was the man; the country was the United States of America. Vonnegut felt that his country had disappeared right under his – and the Constitution's – feet, through what he called "the sleaziest, low-comedy Keystone Cops-style coup d'état imaginable." He was talking about the Bush administration. Were Vonnegut still alive in the post-Bush era, he would not have felt that his country had returned.

How had our country disappeared? Vonnegut proposed that among the contributing factors was that it had been invaded – as if by the Martians – by people with a particularly frightening mental illness. People with this illness were termed psychopaths. (The term nowadays is anti-social personality disorder.) These are terms for people who are smart, personable, and engaging, but who have no consciences. They are not guided by a sense of right or wrong. They seem to be unaffected by the feelings of others, including feelings of distress caused by their actions. Straying from a decent way of treating people, or violating ethical codes causes no anxiety, the anxiety which is what causes the rest of us to moderate our more greedy impulses. If most children feel anxiety when they are pilfering the forbidden cookie jar, psychopaths feel just fine. They can devour the cookies, shatter the jar as evidence and stuff it in the trash can. When accused, they can argue with apparent sincerity that the cookie jar has been missing for at least a week. There suffer no remorse, no guilt, no shame. They are free to do anything, no matter how harmful.

Psychopaths can be very tricky to recognize. As psychiatrist Dr. Hervey Cleckly wrote in his classic *The Mask of Sanity* in 1941, psychopaths are not technically insane. They don't have a psychosis, like schizophrenia. They are experts in appearing normal. They can act the role of a caring, concerned executive, even though they actually do not seem to experience such feelings. If they hurt somebody, they don't modify their behavior.

The United States corporate and government spheres have become, Vonnegut suggested, a perfect habitat for psychopaths. What has allowed so many psychopaths to rise so high in corporations, and then government, he wrote, "is that they are so decisive. They are going to do something every fuckin' day and they are not afraid. Unlike normal people, they are never filled with doubts, for the simple reason that they don't give a fuck what happens next. Simply can't. Do this! Do that! Mobilize the reserves! Privatize the public schools! Attack Iraq! Cut health care! Tap everybody's telephone! Cut taxes on the rich!"

In a country in which much of human culture has been rendered into machines for the manufacture of money, psychopaths are the ideal leaders. They are very focused. They are outcome oriented. They are frequently charming, and usually very bright and able. They can lay off thousands of people, or deny people health care, or have them waterboarded, and it does not disturb their sleep. They can be impressively confident. Psychopaths can be dynamic leaders of enterprises, but are handicapped by their lack of feelings for relationships. They may be accomplished captains of industry, or senators, or surgeons, but their families are frequently abused and miserable. Most psychotherapists have seen the wives or husband or children of such accomplished people.

Since psychopaths are usually very smart, they can be quite competent at impersonating regular human beings in positions of power. Since they don't care how their actions affect people, they can rise to great height in enterprises dealing with power and money. They can manufacture bombs or run hospitals. Whatever the undertaking, it is all the same to them. It's

just business.

The economic system that remains after the destruction of American local cultures has created an excellent employment picture for psychopaths. But the opportunities open to them are now so vast that there is apparently now an actual labor shortage. At least that is the only explanation I can find for the rise of a cadre of psychopathic leaders who resemble the usual type in all ways but one: they're simply not that smart. One has only to look at right-wing not-so-Christian fundamentalists to see the peculiar emergence of a second-string of psychopaths.

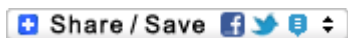
The US has been endowed with abundant resources, and there have always been a more than sufficient supply of psychopaths of the first intellectual grade to supply corporate suites and their subsidiary, the Congress. Why is there now a downgrade to the dumb ones, like the lowering of standards for military recruits to deal with a shortage of cannon fodder?

It is no secret that the Koch brothers and others of the super-rich seem to have undertaken a final push to consolidate control through the conversion of a marginally democratic to an essentially fascist state; extreme right-wing, authoritarian, and demagogic. This kind of government is ideal for control of a populace by the moneyed elite. To carry this out requires the employment of many 'kept' politicians to excite and misdirect scared and angry – and ignorant – voters. Lest the citizenry realize who stole their money and storm their castles with torches, the rapacious elite need politicians who will carry out the work of re-directing anger at teachers, or labor unions, or the poor. I can only conclude that the people who now own the country couldn't find any first-rate psychopaths to carry out their work. Or maybe the smart ones were all occupied. So they had to go to second-stringers, people who could actually believe what they were told to say.

We are a country who has become second-best, even in the quality of our psychopaths.

David B. Schwartz, Ph.D practices [psychotherapy](#) in Ithaca, NY. His books include Who Cares? Rediscovering Community and the forthcoming The Sidewalk Psychotherapist.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:12 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Felicity Arbuthnot: Vision of a War Without End

The Anglo-American Relationship: Vision of a War Without End

Obama's Visit. Part II ([Part I](#))

by Felicity Arbuthnot [article link](#)

June 5, 2011 | Global Research

"Security is the mother of danger and the grandmother of destruction." Thomas Fuller (1608-1661.)

Having joked about putting the "apostrophe" back in Obama (as in O'Hanlon, O'Reilly, O'Rourke) in Ireland (and having apparently forgotten that his family name comes from Africa not Ireland) President Obama fled Ireland ahead of the clouds of volcanic ash from Iceland, again plaguing European flights, arriving in London a night early. The American Ambassador being unexpectedly charged with putting up the Obamas and making arrangements for a cast of approaching two thousand.

Listening to his speech to Parliament, the re-eruption of the volcano seemed a bit of an omen.

Having reminded parliamentarians and the House of Lords, that they were in the presence of greatness (" ... the last three speakers here were the Pope, Her Majesty the Queen and Nelson Mandela") he delivered a lesson to them and the U.K's population on their own history. There was the Magna Carta, a brief resume of the laws formed, over centuries, in Parliament's Westminster Hall, where he spoke - and of course Churchill, Roosevelt and the "special relationship", dredged up as inevitably the mud from the river Thames, flowing outside the building .

We had, to quote Churchill, "fought them on the beaches .." together. Obama in fact put it: "We are the allies who landed at

Omaha and Gold, who sacrificed side by side ..." said the man who (as Prime Minister Cameron) was born a couple of decades later. Forgotten now, was that shortly after the "sacrifices", many of his father's countrymen were fighting the British in war for their country, which has currently brought Kenyans to London's High Court, still seeking reparation for alleged unspeakable tortures suffered at British hands. Pity he didn't use the occasion to say a word on their behalf. From Kenya to Basra, from My Lai to Falluja, little changes, including the delusional re-writing of history.

Then on to the "shared values." The: "... longing for freedom and human dignity ... is universal (beating) in every heart." He continued: "... there are few nations that stand firmer, speak louder, and fight harder to defend democratic values around the world than the United States and the United Kingdom."

"Together, with our allies, we forged a lasting peace from a cold war (our alliances now include) the nations of Easter Europe." No mention of forging of U.S., bases there, of "extraordinary rendition" arrangements and a proposed U.S., missile "shield" - and Russia now near surrounded by U.S., bases.

"And when there was strife in the Balkans, we worked together to keep the peace." Heaven preserve any people who come under a ten week "peace keeping" blitzkrieg (24th March 1999-11th June 1999) involving one thousand aircraft and thirty eight thousand bombing missions.

The combat mission in Iraq was over (tell that to the Iraqis), the Taliban were "broken", al Qaeda had been struck "a huge blow by killing its leader - Osama bin Laden." (Don't mention the assassinations.) But: "New threats spread across borders and oceans", there are "terrorist networks" to be "dismantled." Our "indispensible alliance", however, is on hand to sort that out. "The time for our leadership is now." Parliament applauded, the right minded surely shivered.

With no sense of irony, President Barack Hussein Obama related that: "Millions are still denied their basic human rights because of who they are, or what they believe." A reflection deficiency on some scale. His predecessor had declared a "Crusade", and his own Administration was threatening, occupying, bombing or demanding regime and belief change, in an entirely American vision of how affairs should be run - only in majority Muslim countries.

Together, the U.S., and U.K., would forge "economic leadership", defeat pollution and "leave our children a planet that is safer and cleaner." Another venue, more elephants: depleted uranium bombs near certainly raining down on Libya, the

deformed and cancer riddled children of Falluja and across Iraq and Afghanistan; still paying the price in the Balkans - a price which will only begin to "deplete" after 4.5 billion years.

And is Libya - as Iraq before it - the new blue-print for "economic leadership" - freeze all perfectly legitimate bank accounts, keep or "redistribute" national wealth, grab all natural resources, bomb back to a pre-industrial age - then award the reconstruction contracts to the destroyers?

"Our nations" would "confront evil" as we had "fought them on the beaches and on the landing grounds", but that was Hitler, "today we confront a different enemy (who have) killed thousands of Muslims - men, women and children - around the globe." Comment redundant.

"We fight an enemy that respects no law of war (but we live) up to the values, the rule of law and due process that we so ardently defend." Amid the applause, the small matter of these "values" having included the illegal invasion and destruction of Iraq (and a pack of lies to justify it) the ongoing bombing of Libya without Congressional approval, the more than questionable legality of the invasion of Afghanistan, the illegal bombing of Pakistan, and the threats against Iran to mention but a few. (In context, in a co-authored piece in The Times - 24th., May - Obama and Cameron wrote: "We are reluctant to use force, but when our interests and values come together, we know that we have the responsibility to act.")

"Interests" eh?

Irony thicker than smog pervading the thousand year old Hall, was apparently lost on his rapt audience of law makers. He talked of the threats of: "terrorism, piracy ... ballistic missiles" - as ally Israel is not brought to account for the murders on

and seizing in international waters, of the Mavi Marmara exactly a year ago, the previous ramming of the Dignity, also in international waters, and the threats to any ships heading for Palestinian territorial waters. And clearly the terrorism and ballistic missiles of the U.S.-U.K "indispensible relationship", in encyclopaedia-length acts and decimations, are a price others must pay, any time, any where, to have our "shared values" bombed in to them.

As hospitals continue to be bombed in Libya by the "allied forces" (as in the other "liberations" thirty two in Baghdad alone, according to a recent Report) : "We should try and help the hungry feed themselves, the doctors care for the sick ... support countries that confront corruption ... allow women and girls to reach their full potential." Freezing national assets and bombing, equals empty food stores, no wherewithal for doctors to treat, even where facilities remain - and in Iraq with a previously womens' work force virtually equal to men, Baghdad University studies show women have been set back around a hundred years. Educational drop out is estimated at up to seventy percent. Iraq and Afghanistan under U.S., and U.K., occupation became two of the most corrupt countries in the world.

"Power rarely gives up without a fight", the Nobel Laureate informed. Indeed. And magnanamously, "sometimes" (we will work) "with partners who are not perfect: to protect against disruptions of the world's energy supply." Goodness, wonder how that one slipped in.

For those cynically thinking Libya was about oil, and the so called "Eighth Wonder", the project to release the country's gigantic water reserves, the gold bullion in the Central Bank and the country's strategic value, no. It is: " ...truth that guides our action in Libya." There's a first. And: " ... when a leader is threatening to massacre his own people ..." - straight out of that Iraq hand book again. And were there not allegedly a few CIA backed "rebels", who kicked it all off in Benghazi?

"We will proceed with humility" - surely if the audience had been standing, rather than sitting, at least a few would have fallen over. Freedom must not be:: "imposed from without." Contrarily, the U.S., and U.K., have delivered it: "from the beaches of Normandy, to the Balkans (and now) Benghazi." The two countries share: "a leadership essential to the cause of human dignity (and are) indispensable to this moment in history." They are : " .. two of the most powerful nations in the history of the world", not alone militarily, economically or because of: "the land we have claimed" (another truth, read killed for and "invaded.) Delusion reigns supreme - and no mention that both are "economically" approaching basket case status.

Another shared value, again oiling his way back to Churchill and Roosevelt and "manifest", as in destiny, is a common belief in : " ... a conviction that we have a say in how this story ends." When the President signed the visitors book at Westminster Abbey he dated it 2008, the year he campaigned with the "Yes we can" slogan, played his African roots, not his Irish ones and won. Perhaps a scary Freudian slip: "Yes we can" - now anywhere on earth.

The President chose to send his daughters to the Sidwell Quaker school, which nurtures the "inner light" in every child (the "light" he has followed his predecessors in putting out, in children beyond counting, throughout the globe.)

I wonder if he has read the first Quaker declaration, proclaiming peace, a testimony, by Margaret Fell, to King Charles 11, of 1660:

" We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace ... it is our desire that others' feet make walk in the same, and (we) do deny and bear witness against all strife and wars ... Our weapons are not physical but spiritual and (we) speak the truth in plainness and simpleness of heart."

It seems every line, commitment, statement, action, contradicts the previous one. Were he not the President of the United States, it might be funny. I wonder if his daughters too, are confused.

See Also: [Libya says NATO raids killed 718 civilians](#)

Felicity Arbuthnot is a frequent contributor to Global Research.



Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:01 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Saturday, June 4, 2011

Bob Chapman: Towards a Worldwide Inflationary Depression

Towards a Worldwide Inflationary Depression

The Anglo-American Empire is in an ongoing State of Collapse

by Bob Chapman [article link](#)

June 4, 2011 | Global Research

According to our calculations we have been in an inflationary depression since February of 2009. Everyone looks back on the deflationary depression of the 1930s as a benchmark or a reference. As far as we are concerned the 1930's depression only ended when the powers behind government arranged another war. Few talk about the recession of the early 1920s, which only lasted two years and was caused by the newly formed Fed, which financed US participation in World War I. They raised interest rates, which enticed citizens to save, which provided money for loans for research and expansion. The Fed, other than raising rates, stayed neutral, as did the Treasury. The result was the recession ended quickly. A bad story with a happy ending, which contributed to the roaring 20s, which the Fed eventually turned into a depression via their interference.

There was no deficit spending in the 1920s and funded debt fell by 1/3rd. That went on from 1945 to 1960. Today we have a different kettle of fish, which consists of perpetually kicking the can down the road, hoping some miracle will save the day, when those who caused these problems know full well the situation cannot now be saved without purging the system and allowing maleinvestment and speculation to die a normal death in bankruptcy. The Fed, Wall Street and speculators cannot bring about recovery, but they try anyway. Those who agree with these elitists are fools and they will pay a high price for not listening.

The Treasury is issuing \$2.16 trillion in debt annually and if the Fed purchases 80% that works out to \$1.7 trillion a year. As QE2 comes to end this month there will be few to buy that \$1.7 trillion in treasuries and the system will collapse into deflationary depression. That means the Fed has to keep doing what it is doing. If the Fed stops we'll have deflationary depression with a year. If they continue doing what they are doing we will have hyperinflation in 2 to 2-1/2 years.

Today's worldwide crisis centered in the US, UK and Europe did not have to happen. It was not caused by incompetence and greed. It was designed to destroy the economic and financial system to a point where the inhabitants of these countries would beg for world government. It began, as we know it on August 15, 1971, when the US went off the gold standard. Since then the dollar has lost 98% of its value versus gold, silver and in some cases other currencies. As this became the monetary future, events were put in place to move almost all industry and some services out of the US, UK and Europe, better known as free trade, globalization, offshoring and outsourcing. In addition unsustainable debt was created to make sure the system collapsed. Of course, as far as the elitists are concerned, there is no problem - there is just a period of adjustment. Part of this adjustment is the extension of the short-term debt limit to \$16.3 trillion from \$14.3 trillion.

When, we ask, will Social Security and Medicare be cut? Trillions in taxes were paid for this old age and survivor's pension. From its very inception the money was looted from the general fund and the bonds issued are not worth the paper they are written on. Mandated benefits can never be covered as the taxes are at this very moment being looted. This is a reflection of what is happening in the entire global system, a hallmark of socialism. As the debate rages, we can assure you the elderly will get screwed again with major cuts in Social Security and Medicare.

As we said earlier the longer the inevitable is delayed the worse the result will be. We do not know what untoward event will bring on the inevitable, but it is there lurking somewhere. When it happens it will be like a bolt out of the blue.

The Anglo American empire is in an ongoing state of collapse, which they deliberately caused themselves in order to subdue and enslave humanity. We saw the faux adulation afforded to the illegal alien who calls himself president. The Anglo American special relationship still is firm at the upper levels. This includes their joint role of guardians of civilization. Just more Illuminist sanctimonious crap. The key to globalist power is control of the world banking system and we plan to take that away from them. This is not 1348, and there will be no exile from Venice. There will only be long prison terms, a confiscation of all family wealth and execution for those who have betrayed our country. This time the Illuminists will suffer the unthinkable. Something they have not suffered in the last 1,000 years.

The Fed is now holding just under \$2.8 trillion in bonds of which they say \$1.6 trillion is in Treasury paper. The rest is in Agency securities and toxic bonds. By the end of June they should be over \$3 trillion. Our question is what is the real figure? How much do they have or are they committed for with other nations that are not visible? Remember, it took two years and a trip to the Appeals Court to force the Fed to tell us what they were secretly hiding from us. As a result they have no credibility, so anything they say has to be taken with a grain of salt. From June to June, we expect that \$1.6 trillion to grow to \$3.3 trillion and the Fed may well have to disperse another \$500 to \$850 billion to keep the system afloat. That would bring to figures to \$3.8 to \$4.15 trillion. That should be enough to keep the system afloat, provide 50% hyperinflation and tend to the beginnings of WW III. The creation of war will be the distraction needed to force inflation, debt and monetary problems into a second position. Who worries about money and purchasing power when they may be dead shortly? This is the pattern the elitists have followed for centuries.

At the same time the amount of Treasuries purchased by foreign investors and other nations are falling and that we believe will continue. The question then arises how much additional paper will the Fed have to absorb – another \$600 billion a year? We do not know that answer, but it doesn't look good.

We believe after having seen Mr. Strauss-Kahn set up for extinction as head of the IMF and as the main challenger to Mr. Sarkozy, that there is a power struggle going on between the European and the Anglo American interests to above all make sure that the dollar remains the world reserve currency no matter what the circumstances. This is really the main battle that is going on. The Europeans want the SDR, the British and Americans the dollar. The latter's thinking is that since WW II the US has again and again saved the world economy, being the engine that has driven all economies. In the recent case of China it is the same as well. If US markets had not approved and opened their markets to China's exports and most favorite

nation treatment, China would not be where it is today. The American elitists believe the dollar deserves its position no matter how much they have damaged it.

You can see Europe going all out to make sure French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde becomes head of the IMF. They want a European running the IMF in spite of the fact that Strauss-Kahn said in 2007 that the next leader of the IMF would not be a European. That is why the Mexican finance minister, Mr. Carstens, threw his hat in the ring. He is in reality the US designate. An additional reason that has brought Lagarde strong European support is that Sarkozy wants to get rid of her, because she is doing a good job. Another reason we see conflict within the inner sanctum is that Greece could bring down the ECB and the euro and it seems the elitists would like that. It switches focus away from a falling dollar and destroys its main competitor, the euro. This is a titanic struggle that most observers are missing. It makes Strauss-Kahn's arrest and termination at the IMF and his fall from socialist party grace a diversion. The battles are for the continued supremacy of the US dollar and more control over the IMF via Carstens. US interests want a Greek default and a euro breakup. The US rating agencies continue to attack the ratings of all of the weak euro counterparts and at the same time short European country bonds. The UK is in this with the US up to their eyeballs. The US and UK have left Europe to swing in the wind. This is what is really going on in Europe. Remember, there is no honor among thieves.

Late developments from our contacts in Greece tell us the bankers, EU and IMF had best forget about collateralizing debt (Mnemonic). The entire country is now aware of what the bankers are up too. What put the frosting on the cake was that a publication in the Netherlands said as a result of the secret deal, the Turks would get a Greek Island and raise their flag over it. That has really enraged the Greeks. PM Papandreou told 30 of his party legislators (Voulefles) that if they didn't vote for collateralization he will fire them and replace them with people off the street. He obviously thinks he is a dictator because that is beyond his legal authority. Each day 150,000 people are surrounding the Vouli, the Parliament and the members are

growing. PM Papandreu now only moves by helicopter, obviously fearful of assassination. One thing is for certain he will have difficulty ever living in Greece again. A woman professor said on TV that a Patriotic resistance has already started in Crete and in many smaller cities; people are signing up in the new movement. The police cannot handle the massive crowds and the military is securely behind the people. The bankers had best give it up and walk away. They are going to lose this one and it means the end of the euro zone and the EU.

Switching back we must remind you again that the Fed is monetizing \$900 billion, not \$600 billion as you have been told. Without that number the Fed could not have accomplished all of its Treasury buying. Of the almost \$2.8 trillion in bonds some \$900 billion are toxic waste, that is about 33%. We do not know their value, but we would guess it to be close to \$200 billion, which the American taxpayer will get to pay for – that is a \$700 billion loss, if that is what it works out to be. By what has happened over the last few years we conclude the Fed is the main source of economic instability. There is very little savings and that is understandable with virtually zero deposit interest rates. The Fed can throw money and credit at the problems, but in the final analysis you have to have a large pool of savings to borrow from. For some time there was negative savings. Presently they are 4% to 5%, which is inadequate to launch a permanent recovery. Quantitative easing only temporally solves the problem. The Fed's approach has driven what savings there are and funds from QE2 into speculation and that does not create recovery. Loose monetary policy diverts funding away from positive recovery activities to speculation and into bubbles. The Fed's policies will bring about one or two conclusions: hyperinflation is obvious as an extension or present policies. The other is a cessation of creation of money and credit, which will bring about a falling economy and economic contraction. At least at this juncture the Fed continues on Plan A – expansion. At the same time we are told an increase in interest rates are a long way off. Toward this end the Fed's balance sheet is quickly expanding and we do not see any slowdown ahead. An increase from 15% to 17% might not seem like much, but it is, especially when savings numbers are falling causing a loss in underlying momentum. This is negative for Treasuries because 80% of buying has to continue to come from the Fed via monetized money created out of thin air.

If anyone believes higher inflation is going to act as a governor on monetary growth they are mistaken. The Fed has little concern regarding inflation and price stability, if they did they wouldn't be doing what they are doing. The government lies about the CPI figures and the Fed swears to it. The figures are far higher than stated and anyone who believes official figures is very remiss in professional evaluation.

Between the Fed and Congress \$1.8 trillion has been spent to achieve 1.8% growth in the first quarter and all indications are that the economy is slowing again. We thought the carryover in the first quarter would have been 2-1/2% to 3-1/4%, but that didn't happen. We expected a further slowing in the second quarter to 2% and then negative growth for the remainder of the year. We'll stick to that projection, but the slippage will come from a lower level. Unless QE3 is already underway we should see minus 2% for the second half of the year. What professionals and investors have to understand is that what the Fed is doing doesn't work and the Fed knows that. The longer they create money and credit the higher inflation will rise along with gold, silver and commodities and the lower the dollar will fall versus other currencies, but more importantly the lower the US dollar will fall versus silver and gold.

The same kind of condition exists in Europe with the same systemic corruption we see worldwide. The current Greek government is an excellent example. It is probably the most dishonest since WWII. And that includes the mid-80s communist government of George's father, Andres of the Papandreu crime family. As we look back we wonder what EU countries were thinking of when they knew they were subsidizing a lifestyle Greeks could never afford? Government workers were retiring at 50. Living standards have been cut 30% to 40% and retirement is now 70 years. These are appropriate measures, but the changes should have been stretched over years. The shock has essentially crippled the economy. Even Draco was not that cruel. The very concept agreed to by the Greek administration to put \$400 billion in assets into the hands of foreign experts is something that will harbor strife for years to come. It must be remembered that the banks and governments should have never made those loans in the first place. Who is to know whether these fellow EU socialists are going to do any better than the Greeks have done? The European and British banks want their money back, and it will be interesting to see if they are successful.

In the US a similar situation exists. Even if there is debt approval on August 2nd, the damage caused by the impasse will

continue far into the future because printing of money and credit by the Fed is certainly not the answer and financial people worldwide are well aware of that. If legislation is not passed, real interest rates will rise from today's ridiculously low levels very quickly. That means bonds would plunge along with the stock market, which in turn means all Treasury fiscal needs would have to be filled in a vacuum by the Fed. Hyperinflation and a dollar collapse would be the final outcome.

As a result of this predicament the only real asset the US has that is worth anything are the portfolios of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Ginnie Mae and FHA. Instead of nationalization their holdings would be sold off to collateralize outstanding US debt to the debtors. That would be \$6 trillion worth. Or perhaps 401Ks and IRAs could be commandeered by Congress in behalf of the state and given to creditors. The Americans thus robbed of their lifetime assets would receive worthless government guaranteed annuities. Those assets would probably be exchanged for perhaps \$0.50 on the dollar or \$0.33 on the plunging dollar. Can you see what your government has been doing and continues to do to you in order to further enrich those in government, on Wall Street and in banking? This is what you have worked so hard for – betrayal. This is probably where this is all headed and you are the victims. You cannot do much about the situation, as the Greeks and others cannot, short of a military coup. This is where you stand and this is where this is all headed and you had best prepare for it, because if you do not you will be very sorry.

Bob Chapman is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Friday, June 3, 2011

Johann Hari: The IMF Itself Should Be On Trial

Imagine a prominent figure was charged, not with raping a hotel maid, but with starving her, and her family, to death.

It's Not Just Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The IMF Itself Should Be On Trial

by Johann Hari [article link](#) [article link](#)

June 3, 2011 | CommonDreams | Independent/UK

Sometimes, the most revealing aspect of the shrieking babble of the 24/7 news agenda is the silence. Often the most important facts are hiding beneath the noise, unmentioned and undiscussed.

So the fact that Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the former head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is facing trial for allegedly raping a maid in a New York hotel room is – rightly – big news. But imagine a prominent figure was charged not with raping a maid, but starving her to death, along with her children, her parents, and thousands of other people. That is what the IMF has done to innocent people in the recent past. That is what it will do again, unless we transform it beyond all

recognition. But that is left in the silence.

To understand this story, you have to reel back to the birth of the IMF. In 1944, the countries that were poised to win the Second World War gathered in a hotel in rural New Hampshire to divvy up the spoils. With a few honorable exceptions, like the great British economist John Maynard Keynes, the negotiators were determined to do one thing. They wanted to build a global financial system that ensured the money and resources of the planet were forever hoovered towards them. They set up a series of institutions designed for that purpose – and so the IMF was delivered into the world.

The IMF's official job sounds simple and attractive. It is supposedly there to ensure poor countries don't fall into debt, and if they do, to lift them out with loans and economic expertise. It is presented as the poor world's best friend and guardian. But beyond the rhetoric, the IMF was designed to be dominated by a handful of rich countries – and, more specifically, by their bankers and financial speculators. The IMF works in their interests, every step of the way.

Let's look at how this plays out on the ground. In the 1990s, the small country of Malawi in Southeastern Africa was facing severe economic problems after enduring one of the worst HIV-AIDS epidemics in the world and surviving a horrific dictatorship. They had to ask the IMF for help. If the IMF has acted in its official role, it would have given loans and guided the country to develop in the same way that Britain and the US and every other successful country had developed – by protecting its infant industries, subsidizing its farmers, and investing in the education and health of its people.

That's what an institution that was concerned with ordinary people – and accountable to them – would look like. But the IMF did something very different. They said they would only give assistance if Malawi agreed to the 'structural adjustments' the IMF demanded. They ordered Malawi to sell off almost everything the state owned to private companies and speculators, and to slash spending on the population. They demanded they stop subsidizing fertilizer, even though it was the only thing that made it possible for farmers – most of the population – to grow anything in the country's feeble and depleted soil. They told them to prioritize giving money to international bankers over giving money to the Malawian people.

So when in 2001 the IMF found out the Malawian government had built up large stockpiles of grain in case there was a crop failure, they ordered them to sell it off to private companies at once. They told Malawi to get their priorities straight by using the proceeds to pay off a loan from a large bank the IMF had told them to take out in the first place, at a 56 per cent annual rate of interest. The Malawian president protested and said this was dangerous. But he had little choice. The grain was sold. The banks were paid.

The next year, the crops failed. The Malawian government had almost nothing to hand out. The starving population was reduced to eating the bark off the trees, and any rats they could capture. The BBC described it as Malawi's "worst ever famine." There had been a much worse crop failure in 1991-2, but there was no famine because then the government had grain stocks to distribute. So at least a thousand innocent people starved to death.

At the height of the starvation, the IMF suspended \$47m in aid, because the government had 'slowed' in implementing the marketeering 'reforms' that had led to the disaster. ActionAid, the leading provider of help on the ground, conducted an autopsy into the famine. They concluded that the IMF "bears responsibility for the disaster."

Then, in the starved wreckage, Malawi did something poor countries are not supposed to do. They told the IMF to get out. Suddenly free to answer to their own people rather than foreign bankers, Malawi disregarded all the IMF's 'advice', and brought back subsidies for the fertilizer, along with a range of other services to ordinary people. Within two years, the country was transformed from being a beggar to being so abundant they were supplying food aid to Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The Malawian famine should have been a distant warning cry for you and me. Subordinating the interests of ordinary people to bankers and speculators caused starvation there. Within a few years, it had crashed the global economy for us all.

In the history of the IMF, this story isn't an exception: it is the rule. The organization takes over poor countries, promising it has medicine that will cure them – and then pours poison down their throats. Whenever I travel across the poor parts of the world I see the scars from IMF 'structural adjustments' everywhere, from Peru to Ethiopia. Whole countries have collapsed after being IMF-ed up – most famously Argentina and Thailand in the 1990s.

Look at some of the organization's greatest hits. In Kenya, the IMF insisted the government introduce fees to see the doctor – so the number of women seeking help or advice on STDs fell by 65 per cent, in one of the countries worst affected by AIDS in the world.

In Ghana, the IMF insisted the government introduce fees for going to school – and the number of rural families who could afford to send their kids crashed by two-thirds. In Zambia, the IMF insisted they slash health spending – and the number of babies who died doubled. Amazingly enough, it turns out that shoveling your country's money to foreign bankers, rather than your own people, isn't a great development strategy.

The Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz worked closely with the IMF for over a decade, until he quit and became a whistle-blower. He told me a few years ago: "When the IMF arrives in a country, they are interested in only one thing. How do we make sure the banks and financial institutions are paid?... It is the IMF that keeps the [financial] speculators in business. They're not interested in development, or what helps a country to get out of poverty."

Some people call the IMF "inconsistent", because the institution supports huge state-funded bank bailouts in the rich world, while demanding an end to almost all state funding in the poor world. But that's only an inconsistency if you are thinking about the realm of intellectual ideas, rather than raw economic interests. In every situation, the IMF does what will get more money to bankers and speculators. If rich governments will hand banks money for nothing in "bailouts", great. If poor countries can be forced to hand banks money in extortionate "repayments", great. It's absolutely consistent.

Some people claim that Strauss-Kahn was a "reformer" who changed the IMF after he took over in 2009. Certainly, there was a shift in rhetoric – but detailed study by Dr Daniela Gabor of the University of the West of England has shown that the substance is business-as-usual.

Look, for example, at Hungary. After the 2008 crash, the IMF lauded them for keeping to their original deficit target by slashing public services. The horrified Hungarian people responded by kicking the government out, and choosing a party that promised to make the banks pay for the crisis they had created. They introduced a 0.7 per cent levy on the banks (four times higher than anywhere else). The IMF went crazy. They said this was "highly distortive" for banking activity – unlike the bailouts, of course – and shrieked that it would cause the banks to flee from the country. The IMF shut down their entire Hungary program to intimidate them.

But the collapse predicted by the IMF didn't happen. Hungary kept on pursuing sensible moderate measures, instead of punishing the population. They imposed taxes on the hugely profitable sectors of retail, energy and telecoms, and took funds from private pensions to pay the deficit. The IMF shrieked at every step, and demanded cuts for ordinary Hungarians instead. It was the same old agenda, with the same old threats. Strauss-Kahn did the same in almost all the poor countries where the IMF operated, from El Salvador to Pakistan to Ethiopia, where big cuts in subsidies for ordinary people have been imposed. Plenty have been intimidated into harming their own interests. The US-based think tank the Center for Economic and Policy Research found 31 of 41 IMF agreements require 'pro-cyclical' macroeconomic policies – pushing them further into recession.

It is not only Strauss-Kahn who should be on trial. It is the institution he has been running. There's an inane debate in the press about who should be the next head of the IMF, as if we were discussing who should run the local Milk Board. But if we took the idea of human equality seriously, and remembered all the people who have been impoverished, starved and killed by this institution, we would be discussing the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission – and how to disband the IMF entirely and start again.

If Strauss-Kahn is guilty, I suspect I know how it happened. He must have mistaken the maid for a poor country in financial trouble. Heads of the IMF have, after all, been allowed to rape them with impunity for years.

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Johann Hari is a columnist for the London Independent. He has reported from Iraq, Israel/Palestine, the Congo, the

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Thursday, June 2, 2011

[Robert C. Koehler: A Bad Day That Never Changes](#)

A Bad Day That Never Changes

by Robert C. Koehler [article link](#)

June 2, 2011 | CommonDreams

I get so soul-sick of the war news because it's a bad day that never changes. Over the weekend, NATO kills 14 people in an airstrike in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Ten of them are children. President Karzai cries, "No more!" A NATO spokesperson pats him on the head, regretfully shrugging that the alliance works hard to "limit" civilian casualties.

Oh sacred Earth . . .

I have a theory that it's all related, and all speeding up at once: global climate change, endless war. We are reaping the seeds we began planting 10,000 years ago, when we left the Garden of Eden and set out to achieve dominion over Planet Earth.

Bill McKibben, writing with eco-irony, warns us to draw no link between the killer tornadoes that hit Tuscaloosa and Joplin; the fires that have scorched a million acres in Texas this spring; the drought in the Southwest; the record snow and rain in the Midwest; mega-flooding in Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan; drought in the Amazon. If we do draw a link, our ground of being gets spongy.

"And then," McKibben writes, "you might find your thoughts wandering to, oh, global warming, and to the fact that climatologists have been predicting for years that as we flood the atmosphere with carbon we will also start both drying and flooding the planet, since warm air holds more water vapor than cold air."

The practice of drawing no links has always been de rigueur in war reporting, which hews to an unquestioned belief in the righteousness of the cause. That belief, generally unstated, is at the center of every routine, throwaway story about the latest calamity. Without it, the story unravels into cruel irrationality — sort of the way the losing side's story always looks when its defeat is secure and history is written.

Thus, in Afghanistan, at least as it comes to us filtered through the obedient lens of the Associated Press and other mainstream sources, dead children have no voices. Only NATO has a voice:

"A NATO spokesperson says attacks on houses in Afghanistan are necessary and will continue, despite Afghan President Hamid Karzai's assertion that he will no longer permit them to take place," begins a dispatch on Canada's CTV News.

This is only the umpteenth time Karzai has "complained" about a NATO or American bombing raid that left Afghan innocents lying bleeding and dead, dating back a horrific decade of liberation and democracy. Countering the president of a sovereign country were the words of a NATO spokesperson, who stated flatly that "NATO will continue to use air strikes against its enemies when that is the only option available."

So that's that. But at least there's some good news in all this: "NATO has apologized for the deadly attack on Saturday,

saying troops believed the compound they were firing on housed only insurgents.”

For anyone not centered in American righteousness and exceptionalism, this is Barbarism, Inc. It simply appears that the American economy runs on war and one of the products this economy produces is dead insurgents. We cheer about dead insurgents (think Osama) because, you know, it makes us safer. But the unwanted byproduct — the CO2 emissions, if you will — of killing these nameless, bearded enemies is dead civilians, a.k.a., collateral damage.

And that’s too bad. But apologies are cheap — far cheaper than dismantling the military industrial complex.

Yet just as we participate in the creation of climate change, or “global weirding,” with our voracious consumption of coal, oil and natural gas, we also participate in the creation of our own insecurity by spawning, bomb after bomb, endless reasons for people to hate us. Terrorists wind up being no more than people with grievances — very often, legitimate ones.

We are not pursuing peace. We are not pursuing security. We’re just producing dead insurgents, combined with collateral damage. And we can’t stop.

As Anthony Gregory of The Independent Institute recently pointed out, Barack Obama, despite riding into office on a huge “end the war” vote, has not only embraced but expanded the Bush policy of preemptive war — revving up our presence in Afghanistan, widening the war into Pakistan, dramatically increasing our drone attacks and, most recently, launching an undeclared war in Libya.

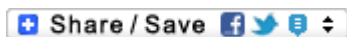
I think this means not that the tens of millions of voters who put him in office were deluded so much as that things are out of control at the political heart of America — kind of the way climate change, and our contribution to it, may be out of control. The systems that are supposed to save us are far too compromised and complicit in the problem.

As the planet’s tectonic plates shift, as the ices melts and the atmosphere spawns ever more unpredictable weather, perhaps human consciousness will also shift — not toward desperation and an increased flailing of more of the same. This is what the present moment looks like. It will shift in the only way it can: toward reverence, born of understanding, for the context in which we live, for the planet and one another. And then a new day will dawn.

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Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. His new book, [Courage Grows Strong at the Wound](#) is now available. Contact him at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his website at commonwonders.com.

CommonDreams [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:51 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Wednesday, June 1, 2011

[Dahlia Wasfi: We Are The Terrorists](#)

We Are The Terrorists

by Dahlia Wasfi [article link](#)

June 01, 2011 | ICH

We have an obligation to every last victim of this illegal aggression because all of this carnage has been done in our name. Since World War II, 90% of the casualties of war are unarmed civilians. 1/3 of them children. Our victims have done nothing to us. From Palestine to Afghanistan to Iraq to Somalia to wherever our next target may be, their murders are not

collateral damage, they are the nature of modern warfare. They don't hate us because of our freedoms. They hate us because every day we are funding and committing crimes against humanity. The so-called "war on terror" is a cover for our military aggression to gain control of the resources of western Asia.

This is sending the poor of this country to kill the poor of those Muslim countries. This is trading blood for oil. This is genocide, and to most of the world, we are the terrorists. In these times, remaining silent on our responsibility to the world and its future is criminal. And in light of our complicity in the supreme crimes against humanity in Iraq and Afghanistan, and ongoing violations of the U.N. Charter in International Law, how dare any American criticize the actions of legitimate resistance to illegal occupation.

Our so-called enemies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, our other colonies around the world, and our inner cities here at home, are struggling against the oppressive hand of empire, demanding respect for their humanity. They are labeled insurgents or terrorists for resisting rape and pillage by the white establishment, but they are our brothers and sisters in the struggle for justice. The civilians at the other end of our weapons don't have a choice, but American soldiers have choices, and while there may have been some doubt 5 years ago, today we know the truth. Our soldiers don't sacrifice for duty-honor-country, they sacrifice for Kellogg Brown & Root.

They don't fight for America, they fight for their lives and their buddies beside them, because we put them in a war zone. They're not defending our freedoms, they're laying the foundation for 14 permanent military bases to defend the freedoms of Exxon Mobil and British Petroleum.

They're not establishing democracy, they're establishing the basis for an economic occupation to continue after the military occupation has ended. Iraqi society today, thanks to American "help" is defined by house raids, death squads, check-points, detentions, curfews, blood in the streets, and constant violence. We must dare to speak out in support of the Iraqi people, who resist and endure the horrific existence we brought upon them through our bloodthirsty imperial crusade. We must dare to speak out in support of those American war-resisters, the real military heroes, who uphold their oath to defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, including those terrorist cells in Washington DC more commonly known as the Legislative, Executive & Judicial branches.

"If There Is No Struggle, There Is No Progress"

Frederick Douglass said

"Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are people who want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both ... but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Every one of us, every one of us must keep demanding, keep fighting, keep thundering, keep plowing, keep speaking, keep struggling until justice is served. NO justice, NO peace.

Dahlia Wasfi was born in the United States in 1971 to an American Jewish mother and an Iraqi Muslim father. She earned her medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1997. Dr. Wasfi speaks out in support of immediate, unconditional withdrawal of American forces from Iraq and the need to end the occupation "from the Nile to the Euphrates." Her website is www.liberatethis.com

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The Heavy Cost of the Bush-Obama Murder Rampage
by Anthony Gregory [article link](#)
June 1, 2011 | LewRockwell

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Enabling a Future American Dictator

by Dr. Ron Paul [article link](#)

June 01, 2011 | The Daily Bell

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:32 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Patrick J. Buchanan: What Must America Defend?

What Must America Defend?

by Patrick J. Buchanan [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 31, 2011 | ICH | Creators.com

“We need to be honest with the president, with the Congress, with the American people” about the consequences of cutting the defense budget, said Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in his valedictory policy address to the American Enterprise Institute.

“(A) smaller military, no matter how superb, will be able to go fewer places and do fewer things.”

Gates seeks to ignite a debate the country seems reluctant to have. With a federal budget running out of balance by 10 percent of gross domestic product, what are we Americans willing to sacrifice? What are we willing to forgo? What are we willing to cut?

The biggest budget items are Social Security, Medicare and defense. To Democrats, the first two are untouchables. To most Republicans, defense is off the table. Indeed, the likelihood is that any budget deal to which both parties agree will contain escape clauses to enable Congress to avoid the painful decisions and kick the can up the road.

Consider the situation the U.S. military faces.

The useful life of the planes, ships, missiles, guns and armor that date to the Ronald Reagan buildup of the 1980s is coming to an end, and the cost of replacement weapons is far greater. A fleet of 2,440 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, for example, will cost over \$1 trillion.

Military health care costs have risen 150 percent in 10 years to \$50 billion a year. The pay and benefits of today’s forces, which are one-tenth the size of those we deployed in World War II, have seen comparable increases. These costs are eating deeply into the dollars for new weapons systems.

And while we no longer face a Soviet Union with nuclear and conventional forces equal to our own, U.S. commitments have not been reduced but augmented since the end of the Cold War. Six Warsaw Pact nations were brought into NATO, along with three republics of the old Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the disarmament of Europe continues in the wake of the debt crisis. Of special concern are cuts by the Tory government of Great Britain, our most reliable ally for 70 years.

While the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have been shuttled in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan, China has fought no wars — but grown its defense budget by double-digits annually for two decades.

She now possesses submarines, missiles and aircraft sufficient to challenge the United States in the Western Pacific and is

clearly intent on forcing a U.S. strategic retreat from the region.

“The tough choices ahead,” said Gates, are “about the kind of role the American people — accustomed to unquestioned military dominance for the past two decades — want their country to play in the world.”

We face the necessity of choice, and perhaps the place to begin is for Americans to ask two questions.

First, what is so vital to our security we must defend it at the risk of war? Second, what Cold War commitments can we relinquish now that the Soviet Empire no longer exists and Russia no longer represents a global threat?

Once the Afghan War is over, certainly, a U.S. withdrawal from South and Central Asia would seem in order, as this is about as far from the United States as one can get.

The same would hold true of Korea. From 1950 to 1953, the United States, with a 330,000-man army, fought both North Korea and China. At issue was not only the fate of the peninsula, but the orientation of Japan in the Cold War.

Today, Seoul has twice the people and 40 times the economy of the North. Pyongyang has no Stalinist Russia or Maoist China backing it up in a war with the South. Can we not now withdraw our remaining 28,000 troops and restrict our commitment in any new war to air and naval support?

China today not only claims Taiwan, but the Senkaku Islands that Japan claims, and all of the islands in the South China Sea, which are also claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Is it our obligation to validate all of these claims against China? What is our vital interest in any of these disputes when every president since Richard Nixon has agreed that Taiwan is part of China? Cannot these countries buy from us the weapons to defend themselves?

Europe is as prosperous and more populous than the United States. And the Russian army is no longer in Germany, but 1,000 miles to the east, behind the Baltic republics, Belarus and Ukraine.

What is the necessity now for a U.S. troop presence in Europe?

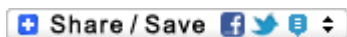
Retrenchment is rarely attractive. But what is apparent today to almost all is that this country is now and has been for at least a decade living far beyond her means.

We borrow hundreds of billions annually from allies, to defend those allies. We borrow hundreds of billions annually from our children's future to maintain our present lifestyle. Our leaders have yet to show the toughness and maturity the new times demand.

Patrick Buchanan is the author of [Churchill, Hitler, and “The Unnecessary War”](#).

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Tuesday, May 31, 2011

[Ali/Chomsky: US Interventionism, Then & Now](#)

Series: Unwelcome Guests

#553 - US Interventionism, Then & Now

Featured Speakers/Commentators: Tariq Ali, Noam Chomsky [program link](#)

Date Recorded: 2011-05-28

Summary: This week we hear a pair of perspectives from earlier this month on US foreign policy, both from seasoned critics of the US Imperial Strategy. Firstly, Tariq Ali reviews the historical record, from the genocidal expansionism of US colonists up this month's exploits in Libya. Secondly, Noam Chomsky speaks in Syracuse, NY on "What Drives US Foreign Policy & What We Can Do To Change It".

Credits: Thanks to Radio New Zealand from the Tariq Ali recording.

Notes: Our first hour this week begins with Tariq Ali challenging the establishment's view of the early US as an essentially beneficent state which extended its territorial dominion almost by accident over established societies and cultures such as the Native Americans and the Mexicans. He looks at the how ending slavery was used as a convenient cover for imperialist expansionism.

He outlines the rise and rise of USA as an imperial power, as WW1 saw the collapse of the European empires, and WW2 marked the eclipse of the European empires by USA and heralded the formal independence of the African and Asian colonies. Considering the ideological conflict of the cold war, he notes Karl Polyani's Great Transformation and reflects that the financial 'crisis' vindicates its central point that the 'free market' is so destructive to societies and cultures as to be untenable. He concludes his speech with some reflections on the hypocrisy of the recent attack by US lead forces on Libya.

At the end of our first hour, and the remainder of the show, we hear Noam Chomsky speaking on 2011-05-11 at Nottingham High School, Syracuse NY on the topic of "What Drives US Foreign Policy and what we can do to change it". Chomsky looks at what really drives US foreign policy, exposing the hypocrisy of talk about humanitarianism and the quest for 'security'. As he notes, the US and UK leaders who attacked Iraq knew that it posed no military or terrorist threat to US, but that it would after being attacked. What is referred to as 'national security' is in fact the security of the hyper-rich, the financial elite who control US.

Continuing in our second hour, Chomsky continues his analysis of where power resides in US, noting how obvious evidence such as the bailouts and the economic motives behind the invasion of Iraq are omitted by commercially motivated media. He draws several threads together, paying tribute to the courage of the Arab people, who are threatening to impose democracy on nations in which US foreign policy goal has been the maintenance of dictatorships.

Chomsky deconstructs frequently used foreign policy concepts such as 'stability', by examining their use in context. China, he suggests, is the real threat to the US, because they can't be intimidated. On the subject of what we can do to prevent such aggressive US foreign policy, he considers the US domestic political situation. His conclusion is that US citizens should take courage from the success of Egyptians and Tunisians in standing up to brutal oppression and take matters into their own hands.

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Monday, May 30, 2011

[Empires Fall](#)



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[Mr. Fish: Civilization and Its Malcontents](#)

Civilization and Its Malcontents

By Mr. Fish [article link](#)

May 26, 2011 | TruthDig

In post-1950s America, an average person's concept of what might be the meaning of life was more likely than at any other time in history to draw on a wide range of source material culled from a broad swath of disciplines throughout the culture. In order to understand why peace was elusive in Indochina, for example, in addition to looking to contemporary scholarship and modern reporting on the subject, one was as likely to draw on the teachings of Gandhi, Jung and McLuhan as much as on the work of Kerouac, Coltrane and Warhol. When contributing to a conversation about baseball, transcendental meditation or political assassination, insight was as likely to stem from a passage pulled from C. Wright Mills, Samuel Beckett or Susan Sontag as it was from a musical quote excised from Charles Mingus or a visual denouement remembered from Ernie Kovacs or a publicly pulled punch line from Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters. MAD magazine was in competition with The New York Times for truth-telling; female sexuality was the volatile and thrilling combustible MacGuffin created by combining equal parts Miller and Millett, and the news analysis offered from "That Was the Week That Was" and "Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In" was often eminently more insightful than that offered from Walter Cronkite and CBS News or Bishop Sheen or Mom and Dad.

Specifically, the concept that one required a certain familiarity with a number of different points of view in order to perceive the three dimensionality of existence—that is, that one need not automatically assume that mainstream media was the most complete and reliable information source available—was verging on common knowledge, and, as a child, I thrilled to the notion that I might grow up both contributing to and becoming enlightened by all the burgeoning guesswork being offered by humanity as to what it meant to be the missing link between the most compassionate apes and the most treacherous angels.

In fact, there was a definite sense while growing up in the early '70s that, finally, after a very deliberate and concerted effort by a dedicated group of very brave and very imaginative baby boomers, all the repressive social apparatus that had found its fullest expression by the middle part of the 20th century had been unraveled by the emergence of the counterculture and the growing popularity of a number of different literary, social and art movements, including the beatnik movement, the civil rights movement, bebop and cool jazz, abstract expressionism and action painting, protest folk, modern

dance, Theater of the Absurd, neorealism and art house films, gonzo and New Journalism, the Confessionalist movement among poets, the feminist movement and the satire boom. Never again, so sounded the promise, would Americans need to feel so pressured to believe that their civic duty to both God and country alone trumped whatever personal journey of self-discovery their natural curiosities and personal inclinations begged them to commence. Never again would the citizens of the United States believe that in order to succeed in life they had to subjugate themselves to the woefully narrow fairy tale that the upward trajectory of Western civilization required that everyone maintain an unquestioning allegiance to, and nonparticipation with, the bureaucratic elitism of the federal government while simultaneously maintaining an almost manic devotion to cloying patriotism, rampant materialism and the codification of racism, sexism and classism into the status quo.

Because of the counterculture, anti-establishmentarianism could no longer legitimately be regarded by straight society simply as a non-belief—as nothing more than a reactionary disdain for the tenets of the dominant culture for the sole purpose of demonstrating contrarianism—but, like atheism, was correctly perceived in more contemporary terms as a viable, humanitarian philosophy unto itself, characterized by its own moral and intellectual purpose and self-perpetuation and frank usability. In other words, there was a definite sense while growing up in the early '70s that, finally, after decades of political and cultural and existential struggle, American democracy was enjoying its fullest expression and that anything—at long last!—was possible.

Regretfully, however, after spending my entire adolescence memorizing, first, all that had inspired the '60s enlightenment period—namely, the turn-of-the-century European and Russian intellectualism as demonstrated famously by the worldwide propagation of Marxism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, individualist anarchism, modernism, bohemianism, naturalism, realism, nihilism, agonism, futurism, decadence and absurdism—followed by a thorough examination of all the players responsible for igniting the democratizing era that ran for about 14 years known as The Sixties, I eventually came of age in a culture composed of significantly less symbiotic parts than I'd been preparing for. Gone, suddenly, was the worldwide peoples movement that had promised to socialize empathy, communalize self-reliance, intellectualize the passions of the id and to institutionalize a radical intolerance of institutions. In its stead was something that appeared to be its opposite, exemplified by such things as the war on drugs, the yuppie movement, Reaganomics and fashion trends that, like a network of completely perplexing diseases, sociologists are still wary to approach for close analysis for fear of contracting a truly virulent strain of Jan Hammer.

Staring open-mouthed at 17 in my Buddy Holly glasses, chinstrap beard, espresso-stained insides, putrid Chuck Taylors and newsprint-smudged fingertips, I wondered what had happened to the world into which I was hoping to enter so well rehearsed. Had the idealism of the '60s been so ethereal as to have dissipated like cherry smoke, a victim of its own weightless optimism, or had it been dismantled by the super-sizing of corporate America? Had it been forever destroyed by the massive deregulation and privatization movements begun in the 1970s and early '80s; movements that had given unprecedented amounts of power and influence to business markets which had then in turn—by being, at their philosophical centers, nothing but private anti-democratic tyrannies capable of corrupting even the most humanely driven among us (Jerry Rubin being the most famous example) with what Lewis Lapham once referred to as “enlightened selfishness”—bribed its participants, literally, away from their ideals with the most excessively narcissistic and ego-gorging of creature comforts?

Existing both in celebration of all that was promised to my generation by the artists and writers and public intellectuals from the '50s, '60s and '70s and in mourning of all that the 21st century has failed to collect upon with respect to those promises, I find myself everyday straining hard against the tether of time, back toward a past that had every indication of becoming some sort of dawn for the Age of Aquarius and away from a future that more and more feels like a pre-apocalyptic dusk that pre-empts the inevitable arrival of a very brutal and very dark nighttime, and I have to ask myself: Where is one expected to direct his rage when the enemy is the turning of the whole wide world and you're met with the agonizing realization that, no, you didn't say you wanted a revolution?

TruthDig [profile](#) Mr. Fish

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:34 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Saturday, May 28, 2011

[Fred Reed: On Patriotism](#)

On Patriotism: Examining the Firmware of War

by Fred Reed [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 27, 2011 | Information Clearing House | Fred On Everything

Patriotism is everywhere thought to be a virtue rather than a mental disorder. I don't get it.

If I told the Rotarians or an American Legion hall that "John is a patriot," all would approve greatly of John. If I told them that patriotism was nothing more than the loyalty to each other of dogs in a pack, they would lynch me. Patriotism, they believe, is a Good Thing.

Of course the Japanese pilots who attacked Pearl Harbor were patriots, as were the German soldiers who murdered millions in the Second World War. The men who brought down the towers in New York were patriots, though of a religious sort. Do we admire their patriotism?

Of course not. When we say "John is a patriot," we mean "John is a reliable member of *our* dog pack," nothing more. The pack instinct seems more ancient, and certainly stronger, than morality or any form of human decency. Thus, once the pack—citizenry, I meant to say—have been properly roused to a pitch of patriotism, they will, under cover of the most diaphanous pretexts, rape Nanking, bomb Hiroshima, kill the Jews or, if they are Jews, Palestinians. We are animals of the pack. We don't admire patriotism. We admire loyalty to ourselves.

The pack dominates humanity. Observe that the behavior of urban gangs—the Vice Lords, Mara Salvatrucha, Los Locos Intocables, Crips, Bloods—precisely mirrors that of more formally recognized gangs, which are called "countries." Gangs, like countries, are intensely territorial with recognized borders fiercely defended. The soldiers of gangs, like those of countries, have uniforms, usually clothing of particular colors, and they "throw signs"—make the patterns of fingers indicating their gang—and wear their hats sideways in different directions to indicate to whom their patriotism is pledged. They have generals, councils of war, and ranks paralleling the colonels and majors of national packs. They fight each other endlessly, as do countries, for territory, for control of markets, or because someone insulted someone. It makes no sense—it would be more reasonable for example to divide the market for drugs instead of killing each other—but they do it because of the pack instinct.

Packery dominates society. Across the country high schools form basketball packs and do battle on the court, while cheerleaders jump and twirl, preferably in short skirts (here we have the other major instinct) to maintain patriotic fervor in the onlookers. Cities with NFL franchises hire bulky felons from around the country to bump forcefully into the parallel felons of other cities, arousing warlike sentiments among their respective fellow dogs.

Fans. Fans.

Such is their footballian enthusiasm that they will sometimes burn their own cities in delight at victory or disturbance at loss. Without the pack instinct, football would hardly matter to them at all.

It's everywhere. The Olympics, the World Cup, racial groups, political parties—Crips and Bloods, all.

Part of patriotism is nationalism, the political expression of having given up to the pack all independence of thought.

Patriotism is of course incompatible with morality. This is more explicit in the soldier, a patriot who agrees to kill anyone he is told to kill by the various alpha-dogs—President, Fuehrer, emperor, Duce, generals.

Is this not literally true? An adolescent enlists, never having heard of Ruritania, which is perhaps on the other side of the earth. A year later, having learned to manage the Gatlings on a helicopter gunship, he is told that Ruritania is A Grave Threat. Never having seen a Ruritanian, being unable to spell the place, not knowing where it is (you would be amazed how many veterans of Viet Nam do not know where it is) he is soon killing Ruritanians. He will shortly hate them intensely as vermin, scuttling cockroaches, rice-propelled paddy maggots, gooks, or sand niggers.

The military calls the pack instinct “unit cohesion,” and fosters it to the point that soldiers often have more loyalty to the military than to the national pack. Thus it is easy to get them to fire on their own citizens. It has not happened in the United States since perhaps Kent State, but in the past the soldiery were often used to kill striking workers. All you have to do is to get the troops to think of the murdereres as another group.

If you talk to patriots, particularly to the military variety, they will usually be outraged at having their morality questioned. Here we encounter moral compartmentation, very much a characteristic of the pack. If you have several dogs, as we do, you will note that they are friendly and affectionate with the family and tussle playfully among themselves—but bark furiously at strangers and, unless they are very domesticated, will attack unknown dogs cooperatively and kill them.

Similarly the colonel next door will be honest, won’t kick your cat or steal your silverware. Sshould some natural disaster occur, work strenuously to save lives, at the risk of his own if need be. Yet he will consciencelessly cluster-bomb downtown Baghdad, and pride himself on having done so. A different pack, you see. It is all right to attack strange dogs.

The pack instinct, age old, limbic, atavistic, gonadal, precludes any sympathy for the suffereings of outsiders. If Dog pack A attacks intruding dog pack B to defend its territory, its members can’t afford to think, “Gosh, I’m really hurting this guy. Maybe I should stop.” You don’t defend territory by sharing it. Thus if you tell a patriot that his bombs are burning alive thousands of children, or that the embargo on Iraq killed half a million kids by dysentery because they couldn’t get chlorine to sterilize water, he won’t care. He can’t.

The same instinct governs thought about atrocities committed in wartime. In every war, every army (correctly) accuses the other side of committing atrocities. Atrocities are what armies do. Such is the elevating power of morality that soldiers feel constrained to lie about them. But patriots just don’t care. Psychologists speak of demonization and affecting numbing and such, but it’s really just that the tortured, raped, butchered and burned are members of the other pack.

I need a drink.

Fred, [a keyboard mercenary](#) with a disorganized past, has worked on staff for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times.

Fred On Everthing [home page](#)
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Posted by mammonmessiah at [2:28 PM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Friday, May 27, 2011

G8: Rulers of the Darkness of This World



Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:29 AM](#) [0 comments](#) [➔](#)

Gar Alperovitz: The New-Economy Movement

The New-Economy Movement

by Gar Alperovitz [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 27, 2011 | CommonDreams | The Nation

The idea that we need a “new economy”—that the entire economic system must be radically restructured if critical social and environmental goals are to be met—runs directly counter to the American creed that capitalism as we know it is the best, and only possible, option. Over the past few decades, however, a deepening sense of the profound ecological challenges facing the planet and growing despair at the inability of traditional politics to address economic failings have fueled an extraordinary amount of experimentation by activists, economists and socially minded business leaders. Most of the projects, ideas and research efforts have gained traction slowly and with little notice. But in the wake of the financial crisis, they have proliferated and earned a surprising amount of support—and not only among the usual suspects on the left. As the threat of a global climate crisis grows increasingly dire and the nation sinks deeper into an economic slump for which conventional wisdom offers no adequate remedies, more and more Americans are coming to realize that it is time to begin defining, demanding and organizing to build a new-economy movement.

That the term “new economy” has begun to explode into public use in diverse areas may be an indication that the movement has reached a critical stage of development—and a sign that the domination of traditional thinking may be starting to weaken. Although precisely what “changing the system” means is a matter of considerable debate, certain key points are clear: the movement seeks an economy that is increasingly green and socially responsible, and one that is based on rethinking the nature of ownership and the growth paradigm that guides conventional policies.

This, in turn, leads to an emphasis on institutions whose priorities are broader than those that typically flow from the corporate emphasis on the bottom line. At the cutting edge of experimentation are the growing number of egalitarian, and often green, worker-owned cooperatives. Hundreds of “social enterprises” that use profits for environmental, social or community-serving goals are also expanding rapidly. In many communities urban agricultural efforts have made common

cause with groups concerned about healthy nonprocessed food. And all this is to say nothing of 1.6 million nonprofit corporations that often cross over into economic activity.

For-profits have developed alternatives as well. There are, for example, more than 11,000 companies owned entirely or in significant part by some 13.6 million employees. Most have adopted Employee Stock Ownership Plans; these so-called ESOPs democratize ownership, though only some of them involve participatory management. W.L. Gore, maker of Gore-Tex and many other products, is a leading example: the company has some 9,000 employee-owners at forty-five locations worldwide and generates annual sales of \$2.5 billion. Litecontrol, which manufactures high-efficiency, high-performance architectural lighting fixtures, operates as a less typical ESOP; the Massachusetts-based company is entirely owned by roughly 200 employees and fully unionized with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

A different large-scale corporation, Seventh Generation—the nation’s leader in “green” detergents, dishwashing soap, baby wipes, tissues, paper towels and other household products—has internal policies requiring that no one be paid more than fourteen times the lowest base pay or five times higher than the average employee.

In certain states, companies that want to brandish their new-economy values can now also register as B Corporations. B Corp registration (the “B” stands for “benefit”) allows a company to subordinate profits to social and environmental goals. Without this legal authorization, a CEO could in theory be sued by stockholders if profit-making is not his sole objective. Such status ensures that specific goals are met by different companies (manufacturers have different requirements from retail stores). It also helps with social marketing and branding. Thus, King Arthur Flour, a highly successful Vermont-based, 100 percent employee-owned ESOP, can be explicit, stating that “making money in itself is not our highest priority.” Four states—Maryland, Vermont, New Jersey and Virginia—have passed legislation that permits B Corp chartering, with many others likely to follow.

Cooperatives may not be a new idea—with at least 130 million members (more than one in three Americans), co-ops have broad political and cultural support—but they are becoming increasingly important in new-economy efforts. A widely discussed strategy in Cleveland suggests a possible next stage of development: the Evergreen Cooperatives are linked through a nonprofit corporation, a revolving loan fund and the common goal of rebuilding the economically devastated Greater University Circle neighborhoods. A thoroughly green industrial-scale laundry, a solar installation company and a soon-to-be-opened large-scale commercial greenhouse (capable of producing about 5 million heads of lettuce a year) make up the first of a group of linked co-ops projected to expand in years to come. The effort is unique in that Evergreen is building on the purchasing power of the area’s large hospital, university and other anchor institutions, which buy some \$3 billion of goods and services a year—virtually none of which, until recently, had come from local business. Senator Sherrod Brown is expected to introduce national legislation aimed at developing Evergreen-style models in other cities. (Full disclosure: the Democracy Collaborative of the University of Maryland, which I co-founded, has played an important role in Evergreen’s development.)

* * *

Along with the rapid expansion of small and medium-size businesses committed to building the new economy has come a sense of community and shared mission. Staff, managers and owners at many of these companies are finding more opportunities to share ideas and pool resources with like-minded professionals. The American Sustainable Business Council, a growing alliance of 150,000 business professionals and thirty business organizations, has emerged as a leading venue for such activity. Most members are “triple bottom line” companies and social enterprises committed to the environment and social outcomes as well as profits.

In many ways the council operates like any advocacy group attempting to lobby, educate and promote legislation and strategies. Thirty-five leaders recently met with Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, for instance, to make clear that the US Chamber of Commerce does not speak for all American business, to seek her help with specific projects and issues, and to fill her in on a range of environmentally and socially concerned economic efforts that definitely do not do business as usual. The names of some of the council’s constituent organizations offer a sense of what this means: Green America, Business for Shared Prosperity, Social Enterprise Alliance, Count Me In for Women’s Economic Independence, California Association for Microenterprise Opportunity. Although ecological concerns are at the top, the council’s agenda is highly

supportive of other progressive social and economic goals. A recent blog by Jeffrey Hollender, chair of the council's advisory board (and former CEO of Seventh Generation), attacked the US Chamber of Commerce for "fighting democracy and destroying America's economic future."

The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), made up of more than 22,000 small businesses, is another rapidly growing organization that works to strengthen new-economy networks. BALLE brings together locally owned efforts dedicated to building ecologically sustainable "living economies," with the ambitious long-term goal of developing a global system of interconnected local communities that function in harmony with their ecosystems. The group's Mid-Atlantic Regional Hub, the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia, recognizes area businesses that "demonstrate a strong social and environmental impact while also making a profit." A recent example is GreenLine Paper, a company that produces green products and works to preserve forests and prevent climate change. By participating in the network, GreenLine Paper gains brand recognition and promotion, as well as marketing, policy support, technical assistance and access to a like-minded coalition of businesses.

Sarah Stranahan, a longtime board member at the Needmor Fund, recalls having a sense in late 2009 that large numbers of Americans were beginning to understand that something is profoundly wrong with the economy. Bearing this in mind, with a small group of other activists she brought leaders of diverse organizations together in early September of that year to explore ways to build a larger movement. The New Economy Network (NEN), a loosely organized umbrella effort comprising roughly 200 to 250 new-economy leaders and organizations, was the low-budget product of their meeting. NEN acts primarily as a clearinghouse for information and research produced by member organizations. "However, our most important role," says Stranahan, who serves as the network coordinator, "has been to help create a larger sense of shared common direction in a time of crisis—a sense that the new-economy movement is much greater than the sum of its diverse parts."

* * *

Several initiatives have begun to deal systematically with fundamental problems of vision, theory and longer-term strategy. The New Economics Institute (NEI), which is in formation, is a joint venture that brings together the former E.F. Schumacher Society and the New Economics Foundation, in Britain. Among the environmentalists and economists involved are Gus Speth, David Orr, Richard Norgaard, Bill McKibben, Neva Goodwin, John Fullerton and Peter Victor.

"For the most part, advocates for change have worked within the current system of political economy," says Speth, a former adviser to Presidents Carter and Clinton, onetime administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the recently retired dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, who has emerged as one of the new-economy movement's leading figures. "But in the end," Speth declares, "this approach will not succeed when what is needed is transformative change in the system itself."

NEI is teaming up with other organizations, like the progressive think tank Demos, on several projects. One shared effort is attempting to develop detailed indicators of sustainable economic activity. As many scholars have demonstrated, the gross national product indicator is profoundly misleading: for instance, both work that generates pollution and work that cleans it up are registered as positive in the GNP, although the net real-world economic gain is zero, and there is a huge waste of labor on both sides of the effort. Precisely how to develop a "dashboard" of indicators that measure genuine economic gain, environmental destruction, even human happiness is one of NEI's high priorities. Another is a detailed econometric model of how a very large economic system can move away from growth as its central objective. Related to both are earlier and ongoing Great Transition studies by the Tellus Institute, a think tank concerned with sustainability.

* * *

A less academic effort concerned with vision and long-term institutional and policy reform is the New Economy Working Group, a joint venture of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and YES! Magazine. Among other things, the working group (which includes people, like Speth, who are concurrently involved in other initiatives) is attempting to create detailed designs for state and local banks in support of new-economy institutional development. (The longstanding Bank of North Dakota is one important precedent.) The larger goal of the Working Group is to advance a coherent vision of an economy

organized around sustainable local community economies. John Cavanagh, on leave as director of IPS, and his wife, Robin Broad, a professor of international development at American University, emphasize the importance to developing nations of communities that provide economic, social and environmental “rootedness” in an “age of vulnerability.” David Korten, board chair of YES! Magazine and author of *Agenda for a New Economy*, stresses a radically decentralized domestic free-market vision of “self-organizing” communities that rely almost entirely on local resources. He envisions a trajectory of cultural change that could not only reduce conventionally defined economic growth but even reverse it—in part to make up for past ecological and resource destruction, and also to deal with global warming.

It is possible, even likely, that the explosion and ongoing development of institutional forms, along with new and more aggressive advocacy, will continue to gather substantial momentum as economic and ecological conditions worsen. It is by no means obvious, however, how even a very expansive vision of such trends would lead to “systemic” or “transformative” change. Moreover, different new-economy advocates are clearly divided on matters of vision and strategy. Speth, for instance, sees far-reaching change as essential if the massive threat posed by climate change is ever to be dealt with; he views the various experiments as one vector of development that may help lay groundwork for more profound systemic change that challenges fundamental corporate priorities. Others, like David Levine, executive director of the American Sustainable Business Council, emphasize more immediate reforms and stress the need for a progressive business voice in near-term policy battles. What to do about the power of large private or public corporations in the long term is an unresolved question facing all parties.

* * *

Obviously, any movement that urges changing the system faces major challenges. Apart from the central issue of how political power might be built over time, three in particular are clearly daunting: first, many new-economy advocates concerned about global warming and resource limits hold that conventionally defined economic growth must be slowed or even reversed. In theory an economic model that redistributes employment, consumption and investment in a zero- or reduced-growth system is feasible, but it is a very hard sell in times of unemployment, and it is a direct challenge to the central operating principle of the economic system. It is also a challenge to the priorities of most elements of the progressive coalition that has long based its economic hopes on Keynesian strategies aimed at increasing growth.

A related problem concerns the labor movement. Many new-economy advocates hold progressive views on most issues of concern to labor. In a recent letter supporting progressives in Wisconsin, for instance, the American Sustainable Business Council wrote that “eliminating collective bargaining is misguided, unsustainable and the wrong approach to solving deeper, more systemic economic issues”—hardly the standard Chamber of Commerce point of view! Still, the ultimate goal of reducing growth is incompatible with the interests of most labor leaders.

Although there have been tentative off-the-record explorations of how to narrow differences among groups, no direction for agreement has emerged. That some cooperation is possible is clear, however, from common efforts in support of “green jobs,” such as the Apollo Alliance (which aims to create 5 million “high-quality, green-collar jobs” over the coming ten years) and the BlueGreen Alliance, a partnership of major labor and environmental groups dedicated to expanding the quality and availability of green jobs. IPS director Cavanagh is working with a small group of theorists and activists on a plan for green jobs that attempts to integrate new-economy concerns with those of labor and other progressive groups, and to link the expanding local efforts with traditional national strategies.

A further line of possible long-term convergence is new interest by the United Steelworkers in alternative forms of economic enterprise—and, importantly, larger-scale efforts. The Steelworkers signed an agreement with the Mondragon Corporation in 2009 to collaborate in establishing unionized cooperatives based on the Mondragon model in manufacturing here and in Canada. (Mondragon, based in the Basque region of Spain, has nearly 100,000 workers and is one of the largest and most successful cooperative enterprises in the world.)

A third and very different challenge is presented by traditional environmental organizations. Speth, a board member of the Natural Resources Defense Council, has found very little willingness among his fellow board members to discuss system-changing strategies, even if understood as long-term developmental efforts. The traditional organizations spend most of their time trying to put out fires in Washington, he notes, and have little capacity to stand back and consider deeper strategic

issues—particularly if they involve movement building and challenges to the current orthodoxy.

* * *

For all the difficulties and despite the challenges facing progressive politics, there are reasons to think that new-economy efforts have the capacity to gather momentum as time goes on. The first is obvious: as citizen uprisings from Tunisia to Madison, Wisconsin, remind us, judgments that serious change cannot take place often miss the quiet buildup of potentially explosive underlying forces of change. Nor were the eruptions of many other powerful movements—from late-nineteenth-century populism to civil rights to feminism and gay rights—predicted by those who viewed politics only through the narrow prism of the current moment.

Many years ago, I was legislative director to Senator Gaylord Nelson, known today as the founder of Earth Day. No one in the months and years leading up to Earth Day predicted the extraordinary wave of environmental activism that would follow—especially since environmental demands are largely focused on morally informed, society-wide concerns, unlike those of the labor, civil rights and feminist movements, all of which involve specific gains important to specific people.

In my judgment, new-economy efforts will ultimately pose much more radical systemic challenges than many have contemplated. Nonetheless, new-economy advocates are beginning to tap into sources of moral concern similar to those of the early environmental movement. As the economy continues to falter, the possibility that these advocates—along with many other Americans who share their broader concerns—will help define a viable path toward long-term systemic change is not to be easily dismissed. In fact, it would be in keeping with many earlier chapters of this nation's history.

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Thursday, May 26, 2011

Industrial War Machine



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Robert C. Koehler: Ignorant Certainty: On Apocalypse and Empire

Ignorant Certainty: On Apocalypse and Empire

by Robert C. Koehler [article link](#)

May 26, 2011 | CommonDreams

Now that the end of the world didn't happen, I can't stop thinking about it. What chutzpah, what a diminished worldview, not simply to make such a prediction, but — even more incomprehensible, to my relentlessly self-questioning mind — to know you'll be among the saved.

In 1011, a guy like Harold Camping would probably have been able to generate more panic than bemusement. A millennium later, with science taught in the public schools and all, we have a little more collective resistance to such thundering certainty leaping from highway billboards. I confess, however, to feeling a deep, reptilian tug last Friday morning, as I saw the sign — SAVE THIS DATE, MAY 21, 2011, CHRIST IS COMING — while driving through eastern Wisconsin. Yikes, that's tomorrow.

What lingers for me in the aftermath of “life goes on (at least for a while)” is an alarmed sense of the power of ignorant certainty. Fanatical preachers are nothing more than the caricature of this power, which, in 2011, thrives like a virus in the American body politic.

“Today we presented legislation that advances our national security aims, provides the proper care and logistical support for our fighting forces, and helps us meet the defense challenges of the 21st century.”

Thus spake U.S. Rep. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-Calif.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, in a press release two weeks ago announcing the committee's approval of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 — which contains provisions so alarming it has been dubbed, by David Swanson, “arguably the worst bill ever considered likely to pass into law,” and even sparked an editorial in the New York Times.

Among the egregious provisions in the legislation, which awaits a vote on the House floor, as Swanson and many others have pointed out, are a crippling of the implementation of the new START treaty and a halting of the process of nuclear weapons reduction, keeping our nuke stockpile at Cold War levels; a total allotment of \$690 billion for the Departments of Defense and Energy (including \$119 billion to fund the disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, \$18 billion for ongoing

nuclear weapons research and development, and funding for various other highly questionable weapons programs and systems); and allowance for the indefinite detention of current and future Guantanamo prisoners.

But the big, scary thing about this piece of legislation — the thing that summons a newer, deeper irrationality from the pit of our collective paranoia — is the provision that would expand the “war on terror,” at presidential discretion, to the whole world.

As the Times editorial put it: “Osama bin Laden had been dead only a few days when House Republicans began their efforts to expand, rather than contract, the war on terror. Not content with the president’s wide-ranging powers to pursue the archcriminals of Sept. 11, 2001, Republicans want to authorize the military to pursue virtually anyone suspected of terrorism, anywhere on earth, from now to the end of time.”

The bill circumvents Congress and the Constitution and would allow the Executive Branch to wage war solely at its own discretion. “It would allow military attacks against not just Al Qaeda and the Taliban,” the Times explains, “but also any ‘associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States.’” It authorizes, with its excruciatingly vague language, a sort of global manifest destiny.

And this brings me back to the idea of ignorant certainty — a certainty about who should live and who should die — that is the driving force not just behind religious fanaticism but, far more dangerously, behind the politics of empire.

The ignorant certainty of Harold Camping is essentially innocuous. He wasn’t calling on believers to dispatch suspected sinners to their just deserts in eternity, simply to relax in the belief that God would do it himself. But the ignorant certainty of the politically powerful leaves nothing to God. The killing is done on their initiative and at their discretion — and it’s real.

This is war, and it has thrived as vibrantly in democracies as it has in autocracies. It could even be argued that the democratization of war and glory, the promotion of everyman from squire to swordsman, has fanned the flames of war. Consider the history of the 20th century (and the first tenth of the 21st). Democratic governments, while generally holding themselves blameless, have been responsible for a large percentage of the carnage wrought by modern, industrial wars.

And the United States of America, the original democracy, now devotes about two-thirds of its energy and treasure to war and defense. With the invention of the “war on terror” — a term as vague and meaningless as “war on evil” or “war on sin” — the political true believers and the economic beneficiaries of war found a way to keep the game alive indefinitely. NDAA 2012 would create the legal framework to disconnect “terror” from the 9/11 atrocities and guarantee the future of war, at the mere cost of the national soul.

Something feels like it’s about to end. It’s not the world, just what’s left of American democracy. Once an interesting experiment in human sanity, it may prove unequal to its internal forces of fear and greed.

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The Search for War

by Norman Solomon [article link](#)

May 26, 2011 | CommonDreams

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Rick Rozoff: The Anglo-American Military Axis

The Anglo-American Military Axis:

West Backs Holy Alliance For Control Of Arab World And Persian Gulf

by Rick Rozoff [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 26, 2011 | Global Research | Stop NATO

The standard-bearers of Anglo-American imperialism in the current epoch, President Barack Obama and Prime Minister David Cameron, met in London on May 25 to discuss the world's two ongoing wars of aggression, those in Afghanistan and Libya, both under the command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization dominated by Washington and London.

As well as joining a barbecue for American and British troops in the prime minister's haunts, in the gardens of Number 10 Downing Street, the two potentates called for continuing to bomb Libya back to the Paleolithic Age.

Displaying what passes for sophisticated humor in the contemporary deadened age, Cameron told the press, "It was...probably the first time in history, as we stood behind that barbecue, that I can say a British prime minister has given an American president a bit of a grilling."

Correspondents chuckled as Libyan, Afghan and Pakistani civilians writhe in their death throes from the bombs and Hellfire missiles delivered by Cameron's and Obama's warplanes.

Waxing as reflective as he is capable of doing, the British prime minister added: "Barack and I came of age in the 1980s and '90s. We saw the end of the Cold War and the victory over communism. We saw the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein and the world coming together to liberate that country. Throughout it all, we saw presidents and prime ministers standing together for freedom."

Standing shoulder-to-shoulder in triumphalism and unbridled militarism, more like.

British, French, Italian, Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Qatari and United Arab Emirate warplanes have flown over 8,000 sorties and more than 3,000 combat missions against Libya since NATO took control of the war on March 31, before which the U.S. and Britain fired at least 160 cruise missiles into the nation. Hours before Cameron and Obama enjoyed their barbecue, NATO warplanes launched a one-hour bombardment of the Libyan capital of Tripoli, the most ferocious attack in more than two months, killing 19 people and injuring over 130 others.

The third plenipotentiary of Anglo-American global power projection, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, Baroness Ashton of Upholland - who succeeded former NATO secretary general Javier Solana in the post - was in Washington last week to meet with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and plan more onerous joint sanctions against Syria, with Clinton stating "we discussed additional steps that we can take to increase pressure and further isolate the Assad regime," exemplifying the diplomatic finesse the world has come to expect from the foreign policy executrix of the world's sole military superpower.

A week before, the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), whose six member states - Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, to a one hereditary monarchies, emirates and theocracies, but accounting for 45 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves - are the West's main allies and proxies in the Arab world and the Persian Gulf, issued a joint declaration demanding that Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi abdicate power in favor of the rebel Transitional National Council financed and armed by NATO and GCC nations and advocating the easing out of Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh in favor of a more pliant and reliable client.

The EU and GCC, with not a scintilla of apparent irony given the above, also demanded that Iran "play a constructive role and stop interfering in the internal affairs of GCC member states and other countries in the region." On March 14 the first of 1,500 troops from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the other GCC states entered Bahrain, two days after U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates left the kingdom, to back up the Al Khalifa dynasty against opponents of the religious minority-dominated autocracy.

The following week Kuwait deployed naval forces off Bahrain "to protect the territorial waters of the kingdom" as part of the GCC's Peninsula Shield Force military intervention.

In announcing the penultimate round of sanctions against Syria in late April, President Obama included Iran, claiming "Iran's actions in support of the Syrian regime place it in stark opposition to the will of the Syrian people." The will of the Bahraini people is another matter.

Since April the GCC, of which Yemen is not a member, has been pressuring the Yemeni government to accept its alleged mediation efforts to effect a change of regime, an initiative backed by the U.S. and its NATO allies. As German foreign ministry spokesman Andreas Peschke recently informed the press, "We call on President Saleh not to seek to wait out the situation, and to seriously consider and accept the mediation offer made by the Gulf Cooperation Council." He added that "The European Union might take new measures to up pressure on the regime 'should President Saleh stubbornly hang on.'" [1]

During his meeting with Prime Minister Cameron on the same day, President Obama chimed in by stating, "We call upon President Saleh to move immediately on his commitment to transfer power."

On May 23 European Union foreign ministers levied more stringent sanctions against Belarus, Iran, Libya and Syria, four nations - hardly surprisingly - also targeted by the U.S. for regime change.

Neither the U.S. nor its NATO allies in the European Union have breathed a word about introducing sanctions against the kings and emirs of the GCC states.

Qatar and its GCC partners were the prime movers behind the action by the Arab League, of which they constitute barely a quarter of the members, to call for a United Nations resolution against Libya on March 12. A week later the U.S., Britain, France and their NATO allies began the bombardment of the country.

Diminutive Qatar, an absolute monarchy with a population under 1.7 million, was the first country to recognize the rebel regime in Libya, the first Persian Gulf state to join a NATO combat mission by supplying French-made Mirage fighter jets and U.S.-origin C-17 Globemasters for the war effort, and set up a satellite television channel - Ahrar TV - as the mouthpiece for the Transitional National Council, as well as providing it with French-made MILAN missile launchers. Qatar is also managing oil exports from rebel-controlled Libya.

A news source in Azerbaijan published the following account on March 28, nine days after the war against Libya was launched:

"NATO's operation, worth about \$300-500 million a day, on sweeping the sky over Libya opens a new historical era: the beginning of colonial conquests by the Persian Gulf states. At the same time NATO acts as a 'soldier of fortune' - a professional mercenary, ensuring colonial conquest itself.

"The defeat of Colonel Qaddafi's ground forces by NATO aviation has opened possibilities for the opposition for restoration of oil exports from Libya. As a result, according to a representative for the economy and oil of the 'transitional government' of the opposition, Ali Tarkhuni, the opposition has already reached an agreement on oil exports under the supervision of Qatar." [1]

On April 14 President Obama hosted the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, at the White House and praised his guest for "the leadership" he demonstrated in promoting "democracy in the Middle East," particularly in Libya, adding:

"Qatar has not only supported [the campaign against Libya] diplomatically but has also supported it militarily and we are very appreciative of the outstanding work that the Qataris have done side by side with other international coalition members." The emir responded by thanking Obama for "the position the U.S. has taken in support of the democratization process that has taken place in Tunisia and in Egypt and what is attempting to take place in Libya."

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is one of 49 official Troop Contributing Nations supplying forces for NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (Bahrain, though not in that category, also has military personnel assigned to NATO in the war zone), announced last week that it will be the first Arab nation to send an ambassador to NATO headquarters in Brussels. The UAE is also the only other Arab state providing warplanes for the now 68-day attack against Libya.

Along with its fellow GCC member states Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain, the UAE is a member of the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative military partnership established in 2004. NATO has conducted conferences, sent leading military commanders and deployed warships to all six GCC nations, including Saudi Arabia and Oman, not yet full members of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. The Alliance's ever-expanding role in the Persian Gulf is designed to contain and when the opportunity arises confront Iran.

Two years ago French President Nicolas Sarkozy travelled to the UAE to open his nation's first military base in the Middle East, in the Abu Dhabi emirate, where he stated to his host: "Be assured that France is on your side in the event your security is at risk."

In the middle of April, starting on the day Obama met with Qatar's Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, NATO foreign ministers met in Berlin to plan the intensification of the war against Libya, with Hillary Clinton stating that the bloc's members were "sharing the same goal, which is to see the end of the Gaddafi regime in Libya." The NATO foreign ministers signed a declaration pledging continuation of the war which was also signed by representatives of Jordan, Qatar, Morocco, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates, all members of NATO partnership programs: The Mediterranean Dialogue, Partnership for Peace and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

Ten days ago Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri announced that his nation intends to join the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the GCC reciprocated by confirming that it was considering the request and a parallel one by Jordan. Neither country is near the Persian Gulf but both are monarchies.

At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo, the monarchies in Russia, Austria and Prussia created what became known as the Holy Alliance to unite the European continent under a coalition of kings, czars and emperors exploiting a patina of religiosity to forever fend off the reappearance of republicanism. Of forces they couldn't control.

The self-proclaimed champions of Euro-Atlantic values gathered under the banner of NATO have now found their fitting complement: The kingdoms and emirates of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. A kinship indeed exists, as the majority of nations bombing Libya on both sides are monarchies: Belgium, Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, as well as NATO partner Sweden which has assigned eight Gripen warplanes for the war and Canada once removed.

Last September the Financial Times reported that Washington planned to sell \$123 billion worth of arms to GCC states - \$67.8 billion to Saudi Arabia, \$35.6 billion to the United Arab Emirates, \$12.3 billion to Oman and \$7.1 billion to Kuwait - in addition to incorporating the Gulf states into the global U.S. missile shield system.

The White House later confirmed a \$60 billion weapons deal with Saudi Arabia, the largest foreign arms transaction in American history.

The U.S., Britain, France, Italy and their NATO allies have revealed their plans for control of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf: A comprehensive military alliance with the royal families of the Arab world.

Notes

1) Agence France-Presse, May 25, 2011

2) [NATO conquered from Gaddafi control over Libyan oil for Qatar](#) Azerbaijan Business Center, March 28, 2011

Rick Rozoff is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Wednesday, May 25, 2011

Brian Tierney: Attacking the Memory of Workers' Struggle

Attacking the Memory of Workers' Struggle

by Brian Tierney [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 25, 2011 | CommonDreams | Subterranean Dispatches

If you thought the bipartisan crusade against workers to roll back union rights would be enough to soften the saber rattling of corporate class warfare, think again.

Not content with the legislative assault on workers' rights in states like Wisconsin, Ohio and beyond, the corporate ideologues on the far right of the budget-cutting and union-busting onslaught are also going after the very history of labor struggle.

A reminder of the academic front in the war on working people was played out over the past several weeks at the University of Missouri where two labor relations professors nearly lost their jobs thanks to a right-wing smear campaign that involved an invasion of privacy and some crafty video editing.

Video footage of Judy Ancel, director of the Institute for Labor Studies at the university, and her colleague Don Giljum jointly teaching a class on labor relations was distorted in order to pull this out-of-context quote from the mouth of Ancel: "Violence is a tactic, and it's to be used when appropriate – the appropriate tactic."

Leaving aside the fact that this quote would be utterly uncontroversial had Ancel been teaching a class on, say, U.S. foreign policy instead of labor relations, the reality was that this was not what she said at all.

The footage was obtained from the university's video interconnect system, which allowed Ancel and Giljum to teach the course to two classes located on two separate University of Missouri campuses in Kansas City and St. Louis. And that video fell into the hands of none other than Andrew Breitbart, the right-wing blogger who has made a career out of defaming apparently anyone to the left of Sean Hannity.

"I was just appalled," Ancel told Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now!*, describing her reaction to the video. "I knew it was me speaking, but it wasn't saying what I had said in class."

After posting it on his BigGovernment.com website, Breitbart's hit job made the rounds on conservative blogs and talk radio, prompting a visceral right-wing campaign demanding the termination of the two professors along with the entire labor studies program.

The intense pressure nearly forced university officials to accept Giljum's conditional resignation offer. But the university reversed course when it came to light that the video was doctored.

“The excerpts that were made public...were definitely taken out of context, with their meaning highly distorted through splicing and editing from different times within a class period and across multiple class periods,” the university said in a statement.

Ancel’s quote about violence in the BigGovernment.com video left out the fact that she was herself paraphrasing a statement made by someone interviewed in a film that she screened in her class.

“[H]e represented the kind of thinking that went into the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and then later...he said violence is a tactic, and it’s to be used when it’s appropriate – the appropriate tactic,” the professor told her students.

The video’s distortion of Giljum’s remarks in class included statements acknowledging the violence in U.S. labor history and expressing his view that violence and “industrial sabotage” may have had their place at certain times.

Again, that statement left out Giljum’s comments that followed immediately afterward in which he said, “It [violence] certainly makes you feel a hell of a lot better sometimes. But beyond that, I’m not sure that, as a tactic today, the type of violence or reaction to violence we had back then would be called for here. I think it would do more harm than good.”

Before these distortions were exposed, the right was up in arms. Missouri’s Lieutenant Governor Peter Kinder was interviewed on a Tea Party radio program saying, “They [the professors] sit around...matter-of-factly discussing violent overthrow of the capitalist order or the existing order, the workers taking to the streets and committing violent acts of industrial sabotage.”

In other words, these seditious labor professors were teaching students about the actual historical facts of labor history in the U.S.

On one level, this was just another sleazy attack by Breitbart and his cohorts. Recent attacks like this one involved edited videos to disparage ACORN, Shirley Sherrod, Planned Parenthood and NPR – attacks that revealed the vile racism, Islamophobia, and anti-women bigotry that are the bread and butter of right-wing attack dogs like Breitbart and his ilk.

But this story also points to the more entrenched history of blacking out labor history in education. Last year Texas conservatives managed to rewrite history as they revised social studies curriculum that would affect the content of textbooks used in high schools throughout the country. As historian Eric Foner noted at the time:

Judging from the updated social studies curriculum, conservatives want students to come away from a Texas education with a favorable impression of: women who adhere to traditional gender roles, the Confederacy, some parts of the Constitution, capitalism, the military and religion. They do not think students should learn about women who demanded greater equality; other parts of the Constitution; slavery, Reconstruction and the unequal treatment of nonwhites generally; environmentalists; labor unions; federal economic regulation; or foreigners.

Over the past several decades, numerous studies of the treatment of labor history in U.S. textbooks have found coverage to be woefully inadequate to the point of glossing over the subject altogether. In particular, various studies in the 1990s and a more recent report by the American Labor Studies Center found that textbooks generally omitted the role that the labor movement played in the Civil Rights Movement and labor’s efforts against discrimination against women and other oppressed groups in the workplace.

An American Labor Studies Center report in 2009 surveyed textbooks published by the four largest textbook companies and observed that labor’s role in social progress is given little mention, and major strikes are almost routinely treated as “costly failures, as violent, as lacking public support and backfiring against unions.” The often violent role of employers in strikes is also given short shrift, if it is covered at all.

Few people will remember having learned very much about U.S. labor history in their high school curriculum. What is considered essential U.S. history in most textbooks excludes the fact that fundamental rights like the right to collective bargaining, the eight-hour workday and the weekend were all things that had to be vigorously fought for, and those fights

often entailed a great deal of violence for the simple reason that businesses and government forces would not give in to workers' demands without a fight.

Academia in higher education has sometimes had a reputation of being immune to conservative impulses the permeate other areas of the education system, but this has become less true over the past several decades with the upsurge of robust and well-funded conservative activism on campuses.

Led by conservatives like David Horowitz, author of [The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America](#), ultraconservative student groups on campuses around the country have been propped up to combat what they see as the entrenched left-wing radicalism and anti-American thought that dominates academia.

Horowitz's MacCarthyite witch hunts have gone after the careers of many professors, condemning their "leftist indoctrination" in the classroom. Ironically, this attack on academic freedom by Horowitz and others on the right is seen by them as an effort to defend what they call "academic freedom," or what others would describe as conservative indoctrination.

Unsurprisingly, the notorious billionaire Koch brothers – known for bankrolling the tea party movement and state-led attacks on public sector workers – are also pushing their right-wing corporate agenda on college campuses. In 2008 the economics department at Florida State University accepted a \$1.5 million grant from a Koch-run foundation in exchange for giving Charles Koch the right to essentially conduct ideological screening in selecting professors.

And as *Think Progress* reported earlier this month, Koch also virtually owns George Mason University in Virginia through grants and think tanks within that school. Koch has poured huge sums of money into West Virginia University, Brown University, Troy University, and Utah State University in order to push conservative curriculum and other projects.

It was against this backdrop that Professors Ancel and Giljum found themselves in the crosshairs of the anti-worker war against academic freedom and labor history.

Two days after the video was posted on Breitbart's website, Giljum, who also has worked for 27 years as the business agent for the International Operating Engineers Local 148, received a call from the international union president demanding his resignation. Although Giljum was planning to retire in May anyway, he complied and resigned several days before he was set to retire.

As Ancel explained in the interview on *Democracy Now!*, "We never were teaching violence in the classroom... We were talking about the violence in labor history, which is extreme in the U.S., and we were talking about the fact that, in many situations, there is violence, and it's mostly directed at the workers."

Ancel also pointed out the importance of the timing of this attack. The uproar around the professors at the University of Missouri coincided with efforts in the state to push right-to-work bills and other anti-worker legislation.

Indeed, this was not an isolated assault on academic freedom – it was an attack on labor education in the context of the wider offensive against public sector employees.

"I'm a public employee. I work for a public university," Ancel told Amy Goodman. "The labor education programs throughout the country are almost entirely in public universities. And of course they're going to attack the most vulnerable parts of those universities."

Breitbart himself made his intentions clear in April when he announced on Fox News that "We are going to take on education next, go after the teachers and the union organizers."

This most recent attack in Missouri comes on the heels of another anti-labor effort against academics in March when the conservative Mackinac Center for Public Policy made requests for the public disclosure of private faculty emails at the Labor Studies Departments at Michigan State University and Wayne State University. The Republican Party in Wisconsin

made similar requests regarding labor professors' emails at the University of Wisconsin. Conservatives were seeking access to emails containing terms such as "Wisconsin," "Scott Walker," "collective bargaining," "rally," and "union." Also fitting into this pattern of attacks on labor history are the efforts of Maine's governor to remove a labor-themed mural in the lobby of Maine's Department of Labor.

The message of all of these anti-worker campaigns is clear: the right does not only want full ownership of our labor – they want the rights to our collective memory as well.

Knowledge about labor history among students is crucial at a time when heightened attacks on workers and unions are taking place throughout the country, including on college campuses. The vindication of Ancel and Giljum was due in part to the fact that their students organized in their defense, writing letters of support and using other means to pressure the university.

In the midst of the war on labor education, students on campuses throughout the country have been engaged in solidarity struggles with workers at their schools who face brutal working conditions, hostile management and anti-union activity. Over the last two months, student activists – many of whom are affiliated nationally with United Students Against Sweatshops – have staged sit-ins at the University of Washington, Cornell University, the University of Texas, Rutgers University, Emory University, Northeastern University, Tulane University, the University of Wisconsin, Ohio State University, and the College of William and Mary.

Twenty-five students were arrested after occupying the president's office at the University of Washington earlier this month; they were demanding that the university end its contract with campus food-services provider Sodexo, a company that has a reputation of worker abuse. Other student-labor solidarity actions since April have taken place at the University of Chicago and at the University of Maryland where revelations have surfaced about rampant worker abuse, including sexual assault, racism, management intimidation and other abuses that have led to campus workers referring to their workplace as "the plantation."

These campus struggles raise the urgency of protecting and expanding the academy as a place for teaching and learning the history of labor and workers' struggle in this country. At a time when workers and unions are under attack, budgets for the poor are being slashed and politicians are recruited by Wall Street to safeguard the wealth of a few, our history of class consciousness and militancy is itself a dangerous weapon against the ruling class.

This is why, as we struggle to make our own history now – defending and advancing our rights and power as workers and other oppressed groups – we must defend the academics who are dedicated to teaching the instructive history of past struggle, especially when they are entrapped in the anti-education dragnet of the right.

In *A Peoples History of the United States*, the late social justice historian Howard Zinn wrote, "The memory of oppressed people is one thing that cannot be taken away, and for such people, with such memories, revolt is always an inch below the surface."

Today, there are in fact concerted efforts being made to rob workers of our past. A fight needs to be waged to defend our memory.

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Tuesday, May 24, 2011

Bill Quigley: Over Two Thousand Six Hundred Activists Arrested in US Protests

Over Two Thousand Six Hundred Activists Arrested in US Protests

by Bill Quigley [article link](#)

May 24, 2011 | CommonDreams

Since President Obama was inaugurated, there have been over two thousand six hundred arrests of activists protesting in the US. Research shows over 670 people have been arrested in protests inside the US already in 2011, over 1290 were arrested in 2010, and 665 arrested in 2009. These figures are certainly underestimate the number actually arrested as arrests in US protests are rarely covered by the mainstream media outlets which focus so intently on arrests of protestors in other countries.

Daniel Ellsberg flashes a pair of peace signs as he's led away by capitol police on December 16, 2010. One hundred thirty one protestors, including numerous veterans, gathered in the snow outside the White House challenging the war in Afghanistan. (CommonDreams)

Arrests at protest have been increasing each year since 2009. Those arrested include people protesting US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Guantanamo, strip mining, home foreclosures, nuclear weapons, immigration policies, police brutality, mistreatment of hotel workers, budget cutbacks, Blackwater, the mistreatment of Bradley Manning, and right wing efforts to cut back collective bargaining.

These arrests illustrate that resistance to the injustices in and committed by the US is alive and well. Certainly there could and should be more, but it is important to recognize that people are fighting back against injustice.

Information on these arrests has been taken primarily from the newsletter The Nuclear Resister, which has been publishing reports of anti-nuclear resistance arrests since 1980, and anti-war actions since 1990.

Jack Cohen-Joppa, who with his partner Felice, edits The Nuclear Resister, told me "Over the last three decades, in the course of chronicling more than 100,000 arrests for nonviolent protest and resistance to nuclear power, nuclear weapons, torture, and war, we've noted a quadrennial decline as support for protest and resistance gets swallowed up by Presidential politicking. It has taken a couple of years, but the Hopeium addicts of 2008 are finally getting into recovery. We're again reporting a steady if slow rise in the numbers willing to risk arrest and imprisonment for acts of civil resistance. Today, for instance, there are more Americans serving time in prison for nuclear weapons protest than at any time in more than a decade."

In the list below I give the date of the protest arrest and a brief summary of the reason for the protest. After each date I have included the name of the organization which sponsored the protest. Check them out. Remember, they can jail the resisters but they cannot jail the resistance!

2011

January 1, 2011. Nine women, ages 40 to 91, who brought solar panels to the Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor were arrested for blocking the driveway at Entergy Corporation. Shut It Down.

January 5, 2011 and February 2, 2011. Five arrests were made of peace activists protesting at Vandenberg Air Force base, including a veteran of WWII. Vandenberg Witness.

January 11, 2011. Ten people protesting against the continued human rights violation of Guantanamo prison trying to deliver a letter to a federal judge were arrested at the federal building in Chicago, Illinois.

January 11, 2011. A sixty one year old grandmother protesting against excessive radiation was arrested for blocking the path of a utility truck in Sonoma County, California.

January 15, 2011. Twelve people protesting against Trident nuclear weapons at the Kitsap-Bangor naval base outside of Seattle, Washington were arrested – six on state charges of blocking the highway and six others on federal charges of trespass for crossing onto the base. Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

January 17, 2011. Marking the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, people protested outside the Lockheed Martin Valley Forge Pennsylvania office where eight people were arrested. Brandywine Peace Community.

January 17, 2011. Three people protesting the US use of armed drones and depleted uranium were arrested at the Davis-Monthan air force base near Tucson Arizona.

January 29, 2011. Eight peace activists marking the 60th anniversary of the testing of the atom bomb were arrested at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site. Nevada Desert Experience.

February 10, 2011. Twenty three hotel workers were arrested after protesting management abuses at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco. UNITE Here Local 2.

February 15, 2011. A former CIA agent turned whistleblower was arrested and battered by police for standing silently and turning his back during a speech on the need for human rights in Egypt delivered by the US Secretary of State. Veterans for Peace.

February 17, 2011. Nine people protesting against the attack on collective bargaining in Wisconsin were arrested at the Wisconsin Capitol in Madison.

February 25, 2011. Eleven people protesting federal budget cuts against the poor, including one person in a wheelchair were arrested charged with blocking traffic in Chicago.

March 4, 2011. Three people were arrested in Seattle after a protest against police abuse.

March 4, 2011. Sixteen people were arrested at a protest against tuition increases at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

March 10, 2011. Fifty people protesting the removal of collective bargaining rights were arrested after being carried out of the Wisconsin Capitol in Madison.

March 16, 2011. Seven union supporters protesting proposals to strip collective bargaining from teachers were arrested in Nashville Tennessee.

March 19, 2011. One hundred thirteen people protesting the eighth anniversary of the war in Iraq, lead by Veterans for Peace, were arrested at White House. Veterans for Peace.

March 19, 2011. Eleven military family members and veterans were arrested in Hollywood California after staging a sit protesting the 8th anniversary of the war in Iraq. Veterans for Peace.

March 20, 2011. Thirty five people were arrested protesting outside the Quantico brig where Bradley Manning was being held. Bradley Manning Support Network.

March 28, 2011. Seven people defending a family against eviction and protesting home foreclosures were arrested in Rochester, NY, including a 70 year old neighbor in her pajamas. Take Back the Land.

April 4, 2011. Seven people protesting against unjust immigration legislation barring undocumented immigrants from Georgia colleges were arrested for blocking traffic in Atlanta Georgia.

April 7, 2011. Seventeen people were arrested protesting budget cuts in assistance for the poor and elderly and calling for an end to corporate tax exemptions in Olympia Washington.

April 10, 2011. Twenty seven people calling attention to the thousands of murders of people in Latin America by graduates of the US Army School of the Americas/WHINSEC were arrested outside the White House. School of Americas Watch.

April 11, 2011. Forty one people, including the Mayor and many of the members of the District of Columbia city council, protesting Congressional action limiting how the District of Columbia could spend its own money were arrested in Washington DC.

April 15, 2011. Eight teenage girl students, some as young as fourteen, were arrested after they refused to leave their public school Catherine Ferguson Academy, which is specially designated for pregnant and mothering teens in Detroit. Also with the young women were children and teachers. The school is targeted for closure due to budget cutbacks.

April 22, 2011. Thirty seven people were arrested protesting the use of drones outside the Hancock Air Force base near Syracuse New York. Syracuse Peace Council. Ithaca Catholic Worker.

April 22, 2011. Eleven women chained and locked the gate at the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in Vernon Vermont before being arrested.

April 22, 2011. Thirty three people protesting at the Livermore Lab which designs nuclear weapons at an interfaith peace service were arrested for trespassing in California.

April 22, 2011. Four people were arrested at the Pentagon after they held up a banner and read from a leaflet outside of the designated protest zone. Dorothy Day Catholic Worker.

April 24, 2011. Sixteen protestors against nuclear weapons at the Nevada National Security Site were arrested after a sixty mile sacred walk from Las Vegas. Nevada Desert Experience. Pace e Bene.

May 2, 2011. Fifty two protestors against a nuclear weapons plant in Kansas City Missouri were arrested after blocking a gate to the construction site. Holy Family Catholic Worker.

May 9, 2011. Five people protesting against draconian immigration laws were arrested in the governor's office in Indianapolis, Indiana.

May 7, 2011. Seven people celebrating Mothers Day and protesting nuclear weapons were arrested outside the Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor twenty miles from Seattle. Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

May 9, 2011. Sixty five people protesting cutbacks in education funding were arrested in Sacramento California.

2010

January 6, 2010. Over one hundred people protesting for union recognition of hotel workers at Hyatt San Francisco were arrested. UNITE Here Local 2.

January 15, 2010. A man who served nearly six months in jail and who was still on probation for hammering windows at a military recruiting center in Lancaster Pennsylvania was arrested at the recruiting center after insisting that recruiters and recruits to leave the army.

January 18, 2010. Seven people commemorating Martin Luther King's birthday wore sandwich board messages saying "Make War No More," "It's about Justice," and "its About Peace," outside of Lockheed Martin's main entrance in Merion Pennsylvania until they were arrested. Brandywine Peace Community.

January 21, 2010. Forty-two people protesting the ongoing human rights violations of Guantanamo prison were arrested at the US Capitol building. Twenty-eight were arrested on the steps of the Capitol and fourteen inside the rotunda. Witness Against Torture.

January 26, 2010. Thirteen people from Minnesota lobbying to stop funding for war were arrested after holding a die-in on the sidewalk in front of the White House. Voices for Creative Nonviolence.

January 31, 2010. Eight people were arrested trying to protest at Vandenberg Air Force base in California, one of those arrested, an octogenarian, was brought to the hospital for injuries suffered in the arrest. A few days later, seven protestors were arrested at the same spot. A month later, four more protestors were arrested. Vandenberg Witness.

February 22, 2010. Five people protesting against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were arrested inside US Senators' offices in the Des Moines Iowa federal building. Voices for Creative Nonviolence. Des Moines Catholic Worker.

March 4, 2010. Four students protesting against rape were arrested after they refused to leave the administration building at Michigan State University in East Lansing Michigan.

March 20, 2010. Nine peace activists were arrested in Washington DC for lying down beside mock coffins outside the White House.

March 21, 2010. Two people protesting at the Aerospace and Arizona Days air show at Monthan Air Force base held a banner declaring "War is not a Show" in front of a Predator Unmanned Air Vehicle (drone) were arrested.

March 30, 2010. Eight protestors were arrested during a march against police brutality in Portland Oregon.

April 2, 2010. Eleven people on a Good Friday walk for peace and justice were arrested outside the USS Intrepid in New York city after they began reading the names of 250 Iraqi, American and Afghan war dead. Pax Christi New York.

April 2, 2010. Nine people carrying a banner "Lockheed Martin Weapons + War = The Crucifixion Today" in the 34th annual Good Friday protest at Lockheed Martin were arrested in Valley Forge Pennsylvania. Brandywine Peace Community.

April 4, 2010. Twenty two people protesting against nuclear weapons after the Sacred Walk from Las Vegas to the Nevada Nuclear Test Site were arrested after the Western Shoshone sunrise ceremony and Easter Mass. Nevada Desert Experience.

April 7, 2010. Three people, including a 12 year old girl, were arrested inside a US Senators office in Des Moines, Iowa with a banner "No More \$\$\$ For War." The mother of the 12 year old girl was called into the police station and issued a citation the next day for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Voices for Creative Nonviolence and Des Moines Catholic Worker.

April 15, 2010. A man protesting nuclear weapons was arrested inside the security fence of a nuclear missile silo near Parshall, North Dakota.

April 16, 2010. Twelve people protesting against Sodexo mistreatment of workers were arrested in Montgomery County Maryland. Service Employees International Union.

April 20, 2010. A woman was arrested for standing in the path of a bulldozer to try to prevent mining in Marquette County, Michigan.

April 26, 2010. Seventeen people protesting war and poverty inside and outside the federal building in Chicago were arrested. Midwest Catholic Worker.

April 26, 2010. Boulder Colorado police arrested five people protesting at Valmont coal power plant.

May 3, 2010. Three people protesting nuclear weapons were arrested at Bangor Naval Base outside of Seattle Washington. Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

May 3, 2010. Twenty two people protesting nuclear weapons were arrested at Grand Central Station in New York city after unfurling banners saying "Nuclear Weapons = Terrorism," and "Talk Less, Disarm More." War Resisters League.

May 9, 2010. Seven people trying to stop a foreclosure-driven eviction were arrested in Toledo Ohio. Take Back the Land.

May 15, 2010. Thirty four people protesting against Arizona's draconian immigration laws were arrested outside the White House.

May 17, 2010. Sixteen people were arrested in NYC protesting against unjust immigration policies.

May 20, 2010. A woman US Army specialist who served as a Military Police applied for conscientious objector status while serving in Iraq and who later left her unit was sentenced to 30 days in jail.

May 24, 2010. Thirty seven people protesting against unjust immigration policies were arrested in New York City.

June 1, 2010. Fifty six people protesting against unjust immigration policies were arrested in NYC.

June 8, 2010. Six peace advocates were arraigned in federal court in Des Moines, Iowa for numerous actions protesting in US Senators offices for the previous several months. One activist, a grandmother and hog farmer, held weekly die-ins in Senators' offices and was arrested frequently. Once, when police asked her to leave, she replied that she was dead and couldn't leave. Voices for Creative Nonviolence.

June 15, 2010. Several people protesting against evictions caused by bank foreclosure were arrested in Miami Florida. Take Back the Land.

June 23, 2010. Twenty two people protesting in favor of immigration reform singing "America the Beautiful" and "This Land is Your Land," were arrested and charged with blocking traffic in Seattle.

July 5, 2010. Thirty six people protesting for a nuclear free future were arrested at the Y12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee – thirteen on federal trespass charges and twenty-three on state charges for blocking a highway. Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance.

July 6, 2010. Seventy eight people protesting against police brutality in Oakland California and the trial involving a shooting by a BART police officer.

July 23, 2010. One hundred fifty two hotel workers protesting against management at the Grand Hyatt San Francisco were arrested. UNITE Here Local 2.

July 29, 2010. Thirteen people were arrested in Tucson Arizona protesting against the state's illegal immigration laws.

August 9, 2010. On Nagasaki day, three people protesting against the US commitment to nuclear weapons were arrested outside the US Strategic Air Command in Omaha Nebraska. Omaha Catholic Worker.

August 15, 2010. A twenty two year old female student at Michigan State University who pitched an apple pie at a US Senator during an anti-war protest was arrested and charged with federal felony charges of forcible assault on a federal officer. Another anti-war activist was also arrested and charged with the same crime.

September 9, 2010. Twelve people protesting for equality for gay people in the workplace were arrested in San Francisco.

September 27, 2010. One hundred fourteen people protesting mountaintop removal coal mining were arrested at the White House after a conference of people from West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. Prior to this protest, forty-nine activists in the Climate Ground Zero Campaign have served jail time for taking action against strip-mining in Appalachia. Climate Ground Zero.

November 5, 2010. One hundred fifty two people protesting police killings were arrested in Oakland, California.

November 8, 2010. Five people protesting wind turbines in Lincoln, Maine were arrested including an 82 year old native of Maine.

November 21, 2010. Three people were arrested on federal charges and twenty-four more on state charges at the School of Americas/WHINSEC protest in Columbus Georgia outside the gates of Fort Benning. Six others were arrested at a protest against a private prison housing immigrants in rural Georgia. School of Americas Watch. ACLU Immigrant Rights Project.

December 1, 2010. Three people protesting against unjust immigration policies were arrested at the office of a Congress rep in Racine Wisconsin. Voces de la Frontera.

December 16, 2010. One hundred thirty one protestors, including numerous veterans, gathered in the snow outside the White House challenging the war in Afghanistan, the cover-up of war crimes and the prosecution of Bradley Manning and Wikileaks were arrested for failing to clear the sidewalk. In a parallel New York City protest, several others were also arrested. Veterans for Peace.

December 17, 2010. Twenty two people protesting against unfair home foreclosures were arrested when they blocked an entrance to a Chase bank branch in Los Angeles. Alliance Californians for Community Empowerment.

December 20, 2010. Six people were arrested after protesting at Bank of America against the foreclosure of an elderly couple in South Saint Louis. Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment.

December 28, 2010. Three parents asking for the abolition of all nuclear weapons were arrested for leafleting at the Pentagon. Dorothy Day Catholic Worker.

2009

January 2009, seventeen people, clad in black mourning clothes and white masks, were arrested in the US Senate Building for reading the names of the dead in ongoing US wars and unfurling banners stating "The Audacity of War Crimes," "Iraq," "Afghanistan," "Palestine," and "We Will Not Be Silent."

January 26, 2009, six human rights advocates were sentenced to two to six months of federal prison or home arrest in federal court in Columbus Georgia for challenging training of Latin American human rights abusers at the US Army School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC) by walking onto Fort Benning. School of Americas Watch.

January 2009, a former Army specialist who refused to graduate with his Airborne Division because he realized he could not kill anybody was arrested and jailed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The former soldier had been ordered home in May 2002 to await discharge papers. Courage to Resist.

February 2009. There were fifteen arrests of activists protesting mountain top removal by Massey in West Virginia. Climate Ground Zero.

February 2009, five peace activists in Salem Oregon fasting on the steps of the state capitol building so that National Guard soldiers would not be sent to Iraq and Afghanistan were cited for trespass by state police.

March 1, 2009, six anti-nuclear activists protesting the 55th anniversary of the US nuclear bomb detonation at Bikini Atoll were arrested at the Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor in Kitsap, Washington after they knelt in the roadway. Ground Zero Community and Pacific Life Community.

March 4, 2009, nine people seeking to present a letter to CEO of Alliant Technologies outlining how weapons manufacturers were prosecuted as war criminals at the end of WWII were arrested in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Alliant Action.

March 12, 2009, four people who were arrested during a protest at Vandenberg Air Force base were fined between \$500 and \$2500 by federal authorities. California Peace Action.

March 17, 2009, seven people seeking a meeting with US Defense Secretary to challenge the legality of the war in Iraq were arrested at the Pentagon. National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance.

March 18, 2009, seven women, ranging in ages from 65 to 89, some in wheelchairs and walkers, were arrested protesting the war in Iraq after wrapping yellow crime scene tape around a military recruiting center and blocking the entrance for an hour in New York City. Grannie Peace Brigade.

March 19, 2009, three people protesting the war in Iraq were arrested in Washington DC. In one instance a US Army veteran scaled the front of the Veterans Administration building and unfurled a banner saying "Veterans Say NO to War and Occupation." Protests against the war in Iraq in Chicago resulted in an arrest there after banner drop.

March 19-21, 2009, protests against the war in Iraq in San Francisco resulted in twenty-two arrests at a die-in in the financial district, eleven more for blocking a street outside the Civic Center, and ten more at the Saturday march when Palestinian marchers were confronted by pro-Israel counter protestors resulting in police using batons and tear gas.

March 31, 2009, four people were arrested in Brattleboro, Vermont, for standing in silent opposition to the Vermont Yankee nuclear power reactor.

March 31, 2009, an anti-nuclear protestor was convicted of trespassing at the Los Alamos nuclear weapons facility and sentenced to two days in jail, community service and probation. Trinity House Catholic Worker.

April 3, 2009, four people protesting injustices on Wall Street and in Afghanistan and Iraq were arrested in New York, NY, for marching down the center of the street. Bail Out the People Movement.

April 9, 2009, fourteen people were arrested at Creech Air Force outside Las Vegas Nevada base protesting against the US use of drones in lethal attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. Nevada Desert Experience.

April 10, 2009, eight people were arrested while kneeling and praying for peace at the Pentagon. Another, clad in an orange jumpsuit and black hood, was arrested at the White House where he was chained to the fence protesting the human rights abuses of Guantanamo. Jonah House.

April 10, 2009, sixteen people were arrested while protesting the war profiteer Lockheed Martin in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Brandywine Peace Community.

April 12, 2009, twenty one people were arrested while protesting the use of nuclear weapons at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site on Western Shoshone tribal lands. Nevada Desert Experience.

April 17, 2009. A man protesting US policies of violence, racism and poverty-production was sentenced to six months in prison for hammering out some windows in the US Military Recruiting Center in Lancaster Pennsylvania.

April 23, 2009, four people protesting lies by military recruiters were arrested after locking themselves to the door at the military recruiting center in Minnesota. Three others were arrested at the Knollwood Plaza after disrupting the recruitment center so much it had to be closed. Another woman was arrested near a recruiting center after placing a "Don't Enlist" sticker on a police car. Antiwar committee.

April 24, 2009, a woman calling for the return of the National Guard from Iraq was arrested in the US House Appropriations during testimony by US Generals in Washington DC. Code Pink.

April 28, 2009, a US Army veteran who refused to fight in Iraq was court-martialed in Fort Stewart, Georgia and sentenced to one year in prison. Courage to Resist.

April 29, 2009, twenty-two people were arrested after trying to serve a Notice of Foreclosure for Moral Bankruptcy on Blackwater/Xe, the mercenary company responsible for so many deaths in Iraq, at its compound in Mount Carmel, Illinois. Des Moines Catholic Worker Community.

April 30, 2009, sixty three people were arrested at the White House protesting against illegal detention and torture at Guantanamo prison. Witness Against Torture.

May 20, 2009. Twenty one people protesting against the war in Iraq were arrested outside a military recruiting center in Milwaukee Wisconsin.

July 22, 2009, four people protesting against Boeing's role in the production of drones, which have killed more than 700 people in Afghanistan and Pakistan, were arrested inside the Boeing lobby in Chicago, Illinois. Christian Peacemaker Teams.

August 4, 2009, four shareholders who sought to speak at the shareholders meeting of depleted uranium munitions producer Alliant Techsystems were arrested when they approached the microphone in Eden Prairie Minnesota. Alliant Action.

August 5, 2009, a US Army specialist who refused to deploy to Afghanistan was sentenced to 30 days in jail and given a less than honorable discharge in Killeen Texas. Courage to Resist.

August 6, 2009, a 75 year old priest, protesting the 64th anniversary of the US dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima, was arrested outside of Greeley Colorado where he cut the fence around a nuclear missile silo, hung peace banners, prayed and tried to break open the hatch on the silo.

August 6, 2009, nine antiwar activists were arrested at Fort McCoy Wisconsin after a three day peace walk protesting against US nuclear weapons and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nuke Watch.

August 6, 2009, two people were arrested at the Pentagon entrance on the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing carrying a banner stating "Remember the Pain, Remember the Sin, Reclaim the Future." Jonah House.

August 6, 2009, twenty two people protesting the horror of Hiroshima were arrested in Livermore California when they blocked the entrance to the Lawrence Livermore weapons lab. Tri-Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment.

August 6, 2009, nine people at a vigil for peace and nonviolence were arrested for walking onto Lockheed Martin property at Valley Forge Pennsylvania and spreading sunflower seeds, an international symbol for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Brandywine Peace Community.

August 6, 2009, two people were arrested when they refused to stop praying at the gates of the Davis-Monthan Air Force base in Tucson Arizona. Rose of the Desert Catholic Worker.

August 10, 2009, nine persons calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons were arrested at Bangor Naval base, home to the Trident submarine, twenty miles from Seattle Washington. Ground Zero Community.

August 14, 2009, a US Army Sergeant who refused to go to Afghanistan and who asked for conscientious objector status was found guilty of disobeying lawful orders and going AWOL at a trial in Fort Hood. He was sentenced to one year in prison and given a bad conduct discharge.

August 17, 2009. Four people were arrested outside the Boalt Hall classroom where they were protesting John Yoo, who coauthored the memos authorizing torture on people in Guantanamo during the Bush administration.

August 22, 2009, two people protesting against nuclear missile testing were arrested at Vandenberg Air Force base and cited for trespass.

September 9, 2009. Four people protesting against Massey Energy mountain top removal were arrested in Madison West Virginia. Climate Ground Zero.

September 12, 2009, seven people who were protesting against the use of the high-tech bloodless arcade Army Experience Center in Philadelphia were arrested. Seven other protestors were arrested there earlier in the year. Shut Down the AEC.

September 24, 2009, ninety two people protesting management disregard for union rights of hotel workers were arrested at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in San Francisco. UNITE Here Local 2.

September 27, 2009, twenty one people protesting against the Nevada Test Site were arrested at the Mercury gate. At an action to "Ground the Drones" protesting the increasing use of lethal drones in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, another eleven people were arrested. Code Pink. Pace e Bene. Nevada Desert Experience.

September 28, 2009, four women, ages 66 to 90, walked past security guards at the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant protesting inadequate safety at the plant. Carrying signs saying "Yom Kippur, September 28, Time to Atone, Shut Down Vermont Yankee," this was the seventh set of arrests at the nuclear plant or its corporate headquarters since 2005.

September, 2009, the US Army accepted the resignation of Lieutenant, who refused to fight in Iraq because he believed the war violates international law, and gave him a discharge under other than honorable conditions. Courage to Resist.

October 1, 2009. A well known mixed martial arts fighter was sentenced to 90 days of work release and a fine of \$28,000 for spraying symbols on an Army recruiting center and the Washington State Capitol building to help raise consciousness about the illegal war in Iraq.

October 2, 2009. Four people trying to deliver a document titled "Employee Liabilities of Weapons Manufacturers under International Law" to the weapons manufacturer Alliant Technologies were arrested in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Alliant Action.

October 5, 2009, a couple, who married the day before and who were carrying a banner saying “Just Married; Love Disarms,” were arrested during a peace protest at Lockheed-Martin in Sunnyvale California. A priest was also arrested as the three gave out leaflets to workers entering the war contractor work site. Albuquerque New Mexico Catholic Worker.

October 5, 2009, sixty one people were arrested while protesting the ninth year of the US war in Afghanistan in front of the White House. Some of the arrested were in orange jumpsuits and chained to the fence. Secret Service officers assaulted other protestors, pushing and pulling them away from the protest site, bruising some. No Good War and Jonah House.

October 7, 2009, twelve protestors against the war in Afghanistan were arrested in Rochester, NY. Some of the arrested were treated at the hospital after being struck by police. Rochester Students for a Democratic Society.

October 7, 2009. Two people were arrested in Grand Central Station after unfurling banners which said “Afghanistan Enough!” War Resisters League.

October 11, 2009. Two women who held up banners when Tiger Woods was ready to putt, saying “President Obama – End Bush’s War,” and “End the Afghan Quagmire,” were handcuffed and escorted away from the President’s Cup golf tournament in San Francisco.

November 2, 2009. Five people calling for nuclear disarmament cut through the fence around the Naval Base Kitsap which houses the Trident nuclear submarines and nuclear warheads outside of Seattle Washington. The five walked through the base until they found the storage area for nuclear weapons and cut two more fences to get inside where they put up banners and spread sunflower seeds until they were arrested. Disarm Now Plowshares.

November 4, 2009. Two people were arrested while protesting outside Vandenberg Air Force base in California. Vandenberg Witness.

November 4, 2009. Eight protestors, including one who was 91 years old, were arrested at the Strategic Space Symposium in Omaha Nebraska while holding a “Space Weapons=Death” banner. Des Moines and Omaha Catholic Worker.

November 15, 2009. Five people protesting against US torture practices at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where military interrogators are trained were arrested. Torture on Trial.

November 22, 2009. Four people protesting the training of human rights abusers by the US Army at their School of Americas/WHINSEC were arrested in Columbus, Georgia. School of Americas Watch.

November 23, 2009. A longtime war tax resister pled guilty to avoiding paying taxes for war at court in Bangor Maine. National War Tax Resistance Coordination Committee.

December 1, 2009. Protestors at 100 cities across the country challenged President Obama’s talk at West Point to escalate the war in Afghanistan. Six were arrested at West Point, eleven in Minneapolis, and three in Madison Wisconsin.

December 9, 2009. Six people protesting that President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize were arrested outside the federal building in Los Angeles. Los Angeles Catholic Worker.

December 10, 2009. Six people protesting the use of lethal drones were forcibly escorted out of the 11th Annual Unmanned Aerial Systems Conference outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Trinity Nuclear Abolition and Code Pink.

More information about many of these arrests can be found at www.nukeresister.org.

Bill Quigley is Legal Director at the [Center for Constitutional Rights](http://www.centerforconstitutionalrights.org) and a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans. He is a Katrina survivor and has been active in human rights in Haiti for years with the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. Contact Bill at quigley77@gmail.com

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Monday, May 23, 2011

[Mass Destruction - Mass Production](#)



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[Derrick Z. Jackson: US Arms Sales at Odds with Words](#)

US Arms Sales at Odds with Words

by Derrick Z. Jackson [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 22, 2011 | CommonDreams | The Boston Globe

ON THE same day President Obama pressed again for peace in the Middle East, the Associated Press reminded us that the United States cannot help itself from flooding the region with the instruments of war, reporting that the nation is “quietly expanding defense ties on a vast scale” with Saudi Arabia.

How vast? The part that has been highly publicized is the new \$60 billion arms sale made to the Saudis because of the ongoing threat of Iran. The deal sends Saudi Arabia 84 new F-15s and upgrades to 70 F-15s. It also sends them about 180 Apache, Black Hawk, and Little Bird helicopters, as well as anti-ship and anti-radar missiles. In officially announcing the sale last fall, Andrew Shapiro, the US assistant secretary of state for political affairs, said the sales were part of “deepening our security relationship with a key partner with whom we’ve enjoyed a solid security relationship for nearly 70 years.”

But there are other emerging aspects of the security relationship the Obama administration is not so candid about. The AP also reported on an obscure project to create a special elite security force that would fall under the US Central Command. The force would have up to 35,000 members “to protect the kingdom’s oil riches and future nuclear sites.” It would be separate from Saudi Arabia’s military and its national guard and would involve tens of billions of dollars in additional military contracts. But no official of the Pentagon, the State Department, or the Saudi embassy would go on the record to discuss the program.

The sheepishness of the Pentagon was mirrored by Obama’s failure to mention Saudi Arabia once in his speech Thursday at the State Department. Obama urged fresh Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, praised the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, harshly denounced Libya and Syria, and cajoled Yemen and Bahrain to loosen up on their people. Obama criticized in

general the “corruption of elites” and pushed for women’s rights in health, business, and politics. He said, “the region will never reach its full potential when more than half of its population is prevented from achieving their full potential.”

Saudi Arabia is well-known for the elites who still continue to suppress women’s potential. Only 31 percent of women ages 25-54 are in the workplace, compared to 96 percent of like-aged men, according to the International Labor Organization. While modernization and international pressure have led to women being more than half of the country’s college students, they do not have equal access to classes and facilities, according to Freedom House, the advocacy group that has tracked levels of freedom since World War II. Despite scattered appointments of female officials in government, business, and television news, laws still discriminate against women, and women were recently banned once more from municipal elections scheduled for later this year.

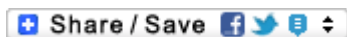
The United States is boosting aid to such regimes even though it demands far less accountability than it is supposed to. A Government Accountability Office study last fall found that the State Department and the Defense Department “did not consistently document how arms transfers to Gulf countries advanced US foreign policy and national security goals.” Among the policy criteria that arms transfers are supposed to be assessed on is whether that country is protecting human rights, but State Department officials admitted to the GAO “that they do not document these assessments.” The report concluded that the gap in accountability meant “Congress may not have a clear understanding” of direct commercial sales of arms to the Gulf region.”

Most experts assume that Obama remains mute on Saudi Arabia because it has the largest oil production capacity in the world and its strategic importance against Iran. But these arms deals, public and secret, up the ante on Obama to be far more transparent about what our relationship is to a nation that is assisting the Bahrain government in its crackdown on freedom protesters. Even as Obama praised the people of North Africa who have risen up for human rights “in the face of batons and sometimes bullets,” he is sending yet more bullets, planes, and missiles to nations that fall far too short on human rights.

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Sunday, May 22, 2011

Engendered War: Wanton Spiritual Depravity



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Paul Craig Roberts: Is the US Driving the World Towards World War III

The warmongers in Washington are driving the world toward World War III. Once a country is captured by its military/security complex, the demand for profit drives the country deeper into war.

Is the US Driving the World Towards World War III: Osama's Alleged Compound. How Many SEALs Died?

by Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#)

May 21, 2011 | Global Research

In a sensational and explosive TV report, the Pakistani News Agency has provided a live interview with an eye witness to the US attack on the alleged compound of Osama bin Laden. The eye witness, Mohammad Bashir, describes the event as it unfolded. Of the three helicopters, “there was only one that landed the men and came back to pick them up, but as he [the helicopter] was picking them up, it blew away and caught fire.” The witness says that there were no survivors, just dead bodies and pieces of bodies everywhere. “We saw the helicopter burning, we saw the dead bodies, then everything was removed and now there is nothing.”

I always wondered how a helicopter could crash, as the White House reported, without at least producing injuries. Yet, in the original White House story, the SEALs not only survived a 40-minute firefight with al Qaeda, “the most highly trained, most dangerous, most vicious killers on the planet,” without a scratch, but also survived a helicopter crash without a scratch.

The Pakistani news report is available on you tube. The Internet site, Veterans Today, posted a translation along with a video of the interview. Information Clearing House [made it available](#) on May 17.

If the interview is not a hoax and the translation is correct, we now know the answer to the unasked question: Why was there no White House ceremony with President Obama pinning medals all over the heroic SEALs who tracked down and executed Public Enemy Number One?

The notion that Obama had to keep the SEALs’ identity secret in order to protect the SEALs from al Qaeda detracts from

the heroic tough guy image of the SEALs, and it strains credulity that Obama's political handlers would not have milked the occasion for all it is worth.

Other than on the Veterans Today and ICH Internet sites, I have not seen any mention of the Pakistani news story. If the White House press corps is aware of the report, no one has asked President Obama or his press spokesperson about it. Helen Thomas was the last American reporter sufficiently brave to ask such a question, and she was exterminated by the Israel Lobby.

In America we have reached the point where anyone who tells the truth is dismissed as a "conspiracy theorist" and marginalized. Recently, a professor of nano-chemistry from the University of Copenhagen made a lecture tour of major Canadian universities explaining the research, conducted by himself and a team of physicists and engineers, that resulted in finding small particles of unreacted nano-thermite in dust samples from the wreckage of the World Trade Center towers in addition to other evidence that the professor and the research team regard as conclusive scientific proof that the towers were brought down by controlled demolition.

No American university dared to invite him, and as far as I know no mention of the explosive research report has ever appeared in the American press.

I find it astonishing that 1,500 architects and engineers, who actually know something about buildings, their construction, their strength and weaknesses, and who have repeatedly requested a real investigation of the destruction of the three WTC buildings, are regarded as conspiracy kooks by people who know nothing whatsoever about architecture or engineering or buildings. The same goes for the large number of pilots who question the flight maneuvers carried out during the attacks, and the surviving firemen and "first responders" who report both hearing and personally experiencing explosions in the towers, some of which occurred in sub-basements.

A large number of high-ranking political figures abroad don't believe a word of the official 9/11 story. For example, the former president of Italy and dean of the Italian Senate, told Italy's oldest newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, that the intelligence services of Europe "know well that the disastrous [9/11] attack has been planned and realized by the American CIA and the [Israeli] Mossad . . . in order to put under accusation the Arabic Countries and in order to induce the western powers to take part in [the invasions]."

Even people who report that there are dissenting views, as I have done, are branded conspiracy theorists and banned from the media. This extends into the Internet in addition to newspapers and TV. Not long ago a reporter for the Internet site, *The Huffington Post*, discovered that Pat Buchanan and I are critics of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions. He was fascinated that there were some Reagan administration officials who dissented from the Republican Party's war position and asked to interview me.

After he posted the interview on *The Huffington Post*, someone told him that I was not sound on 9/11. In a panic the reporter contacted me, demanding to know if I disbelieved the official 9/11 story. I replied that being neither architect, engineer, physicist, chemist, pilot, nor firefighter, I had little to contribute to understanding the event, but that I had reported that various experts had raised questions.

The reporter was terrified that he might somehow have given a 9/11 skeptic credibility and be fired for interviewing me about my war views for *The Huffington Post*. He quickly added at the beginning and, if memory serves, ending of the posted interview words to the effect that my lack of soundness on 9/11 meant that my views on the wars could be disregarded. If only he had known that I was unsure about the official 9/11 story, there would have been no interview.

One doesn't have to be a scientist, architect, engineer, pilot or firefighter to notice astonishing anomalies in the 9/11 story. Assume that the official story is correct and that a band of terrorists outwitted not only the CIA and FBI, but also all 16 US intelligence agencies and those of our NATO allies and Israel's notorious Mossad, along with the National Security Council, NORAD, air traffic control and airport security four times in one hour on the same morning. Accept that this

group of terrorists pulled off a feat worthy of a James Bond movie and delivered a humiliating blow to the world's only

superpower.

If something like this really happened, would not the president, the Congress, and the media be demanding to know how such an improbable thing could have happened? Investigation and accountability would be the order of the day. Yet President Bush and Vice President Cheney resisted the pleas and demands for an investigation from the 9/11 families for one year, or was it two, before finally appointing a non-expert committee of politicians to listen to whatever the government chose to tell them. One of the politicians resigned from the commission on the grounds that “the fix is in.”

Even the two chairmen and the chief legal counsel of the 9/11 Commission wrote books in which they stated that they believe that members of the military and other parts of the government lied to the commission and that the commission considered referring the matter for investigation and prosecution.

Thomas Kean, chairman of the 9/11 Commission, said: “FAA and NORAD officials advanced an account of 9/11 that was untrue . . . We, to this day don’t know why NORAD told us what they told us . . . It was just so far from the truth.”

Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton said: “ We had a very short time frame . . . we did not have enough money . . . We had a lot of people strongly opposed to what we did. We had a lot of trouble getting access to documents and to people. . . . So there were all kinds of reasons we thought we were set up to fail.”

As far as I know, not a single member of the government or the media made an issue of why the military would lie to the commission. This is another anomaly for which we have no explanation.

The greatest puzzle is the conclusion drawn by a national audience from watching on their TV screens the collapse of the WTC towers. Most seem satisfied that the towers fell down as a result of structural damage inflicted by the airliners and from limited, low-temperature fires. Yet what the images show is not buildings falling down, but buildings blowing up. Buildings that are destroyed by fires and structural damage do not disintegrate in 10 seconds or less into fine dust with massive steel beams sliced at each floor level by high temperatures that building fires cannot attain. It has never happened, and it never will.

Conduct an experiment. Free your mind of the programmed explanation of the towers’ destruction and try to discern what your eyes are telling you as you watch the videos of the towers that are available online. Is that the way buildings fall down from damage, or is that the way buildings are brought down by explosives? Little doubt, many Americans prefer the official story to the implications that follow from concluding that the official story is untrue.

If reports are correct, the US government has gone into the business of managing the public’s perceptions of news and events. Apparently, the Pentagon has implemented Perception Management Psychological Operations. There are also reports that the State Department and other government agencies use Facebook and Twitter to stir up problems for the Syrian, Iranian, Russian, Chinese, and Venezuela governments in efforts to unseat governments not controlled by Washington. In addition, there are reports that both governments and private organizations employ “trolls” to surf the Internet and to attempt to discredit in blogs and comment sections reports and writers who are out of step with their interests. I believe I have encountered trolls myself.

In addition to managing our perceptions, much is simply never reported. On May 19, 2011, the fourteen-decade-old British newspaper, The Statesman, [reported](#) that the Press Trust of India has reported that the Chinese government has warned Washington “in unequivocal terms that any attack on Pakistan would be construed as an attack on China,” and advised the US government “to respect Pakistan’s sovereignty.”

As trends forecaster Gerald Celente and I have warned, the warmongers in Washington are driving the world toward World War III. Once a country is captured by its military/security complex, the demand for profit drives the country deeper into war. Perhaps this news report from India is a hoax, or perhaps the never-diligent mainstream media will catch up with the news tomorrow, but so far this extraordinary warning from China has not been reported in the US media. [I had it posted on OEN.]

The mainstream media and a significant portion of the Internet are content for our perceptions to be managed by psy-ops

and by non-reporting. This is why I wrote not long ago that today Americans are living in George Orwell's 1984.

Paul Craig Roberts is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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The Threat of Private Military Companies

by Devon DB [article link](#)

May 22, 2011 | Global Research

Jeremy Scahill:

Blackwater Founder Creating Private Army of 'Christian Crusaders' in the Persian Gulf

The United Arab Emirates has secretly signed a \$529 million contract with Erik Prince's new company to put together an 800-member battalion of foreign mercenaries.

by Amy Goodman [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 18, 2011 | AlterNet | Democracy Now!

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Saturday, May 21, 2011

Paul F. Jones: Lost Souls



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Mark R. Crovelli: Where Are the Christian Churches When We Need Them Most?

Where Are the Christian Churches When We Need Them Most?

by Mark R. Crovelli [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 20, 2011 | Lew Rockwell | ICH

One of the most important functions of religious faith, [observed St. Thomas Aquinas](#), is to allow people of limited intelligence and people with limited time for study to know important truths about God without having to investigate them

personally. After all, few ordinary people are in a position to spend years rationally investigating the tenets of their faith, so, if they are to have any chance at finding Truth during their lives, they need to have it prepackaged for them to swallow on faith alone with the assistance of the Church.

This infinitely wise observation is just as true today as it was in the thirteenth century, and the Christian churches would do well to remember it during these especially turbulent political and economic times. In fact, with the world's masses aflame with revolutionary ideas at the very same time that governments are going bankrupt, the need has never been greater for the Christian churches to remind their unthinking, gullible, and emotional flocks of what is true and just and good. If they fail to do this, *and right quick*, there is a very real and dangerous possibility that the Christian masses will get swept away by exciting and profoundly immoral ideas that will doom Western civilization for the foreseeable future.

Specifically, the Christian masses desperately need to have the foundations of Christian ethics beaten into their dense skulls to keep them on the right path during these hours of intellectual temptation. Since many of the ideas floating around the world right now are both alluring and morally dangerous, the Christian masses need a simple set of criteria by which to judge what is right and what is wrong. Fortuitously, God was provident enough to provide Christians (and Jews and Muslims) with a list of [ten moral criteria](#) so undemanding that even the most intellectually challenged among them should be able to determine right from wrong.

The list contains two ethical commandments of especial importance today because of the extreme danger that the Christian masses will unthinkingly violate them. The first and most important is that it is wrong for Christians to kill people. One would think that the Christian masses would have been able to memorize and abide by this simple proscription in the two thousand years that Christians have been walking the Earth, but apparently the density of the [mass man's mind](#) continues to defy penetration. Christians in recent years are definitely [no less likely to kill](#) than any other peoples, and the danger is that they will kill even more frequently in coming years as economic and political conditions deteriorate further.

Thus, the Christian churches must intervene *right now* to remind the Christian masses that it is wrong to kill human beings and it is wrong for other people to kill in one's name. The Christian flocks are increasingly angry, frightened, and impoverished by the political classes' extravagances, and the temptation will only grow to take out their frustrations on other groups of people, such as the wealthy, Muslims, immigrants, or even their own neighbors. This is all the more true today, when it is so easy to aid in killing other people simply by voting. The majority of Christians do not need to bloody their own hands by [shooting unarmed women and old men](#), for example, but they do irreparably stain their consciences by supporting such killings and paying for them with their tax money. And let's not forget about the hordes of professional "Christian" killers (i.e., "soldiers") that are presently plying their bloody trade in the three immoral wars that the supposedly "Christian" West is prosecuting in the Middle East.

The task of reigning in Christian killing before it gets [even more](#) out of hand will be impossible, however, unless the Christian churches simultaneously reign in their flocks' nationalistic sentiments. Like most peoples today, Christians have come to worship their own governments with religious fervor, [a serious Christian sin in its own right](#). They thus do not view killings by "their" government soldiers and police as morally analogous to killings by rapists and robbers. Unless this nationalistic moral blindness is corrected by the Christian churches, [or by human reason](#), by emphasizing that the lines drawn on maps identifying different countries are completely morally irrelevant, Christians will never curtail their killing, because they will inevitably view government-sponsored killing of "other people" as somehow morally acceptable. Without help from the Christian churches, the unthinking Christian masses will continue to value, not human life as such, but their "own" people's lives, and to hell with the rest of the people of the world.

The Christian churches must also urgently emphasize that Christians should not torture, imprison, beat, or otherwise physically abuse other human beings. Nor should they countenance such depraved activities [done in their name by their governments](#). This proscription follows directly from the prohibition against killing, because [to put a man in a cage](#) deprives him of his life and dignity during that time just as surely as killing him would, and torturing him makes him envy the dead, which is worse than actually killing him. It should go without saying that Christians ought not to do these things or accept that they be done in their name with their tax monies, but the Christian masses keep approving of them nonetheless. This will only increase as political and economic turmoil increases, and the Christian churches will be morally responsible to a certain extent if they do not do all they can to head it off now.

The second important ethical precept that the unthinking Christian masses urgently need to be reminded of is God's prohibition against stealing. *It is unequivocally wrong for Christians to take property from other people without their consent*, and it is equally wrong for them to encourage or to pay other people (e.g., tax collectors or mob strongmen) to do the same thing. Like the prohibition against killing, [God's prohibition against stealing is about as clear as man could possible desire: "Thou shalt not steal."](#) One might be tempted to think that the Christian masses would be able to comprehend something as simple as that, but apparently God vastly overestimated the mental abilities of His progeny. The Christian masses accept stealing, by governments in particular, just as much as any other people, and they tend to particularly approve of stealing from (i.e., taxing) the rich. They apparently think that it is morally acceptable for their government to take money from rich people by force just because Jesus was poor and defended poor people. The fact that Jesus' own Father explicitly forbade them to steal – *even from rich people* – does not seem to enter into their moral reasoning. The Christian churches desperately need to undermine this invidious tendency before the increasingly impoverished and desperate Christian masses fall on their rich prey with a vengeance. Failure to head this tendency off will doom Western civilization for the foreseeable future, as the rich take flight with their capital to places that actually care about God's Commandments. The loss of this valuable economic capital at a time when it is most needed to rebuild after the [government created recession](#) will send the Christian West back to the stone age.

Along a similar vein, there is an urgent need for the Christian churches to remind their mindless flocks that it is immoral to counterfeit money. It is just as wrong for me to print fake money to buy your car, for example, as it would be for me to steal it from you outright. The need for the Christian churches to emphasize this ethical precept does not, however, stem from a danger that the Christian masses will resort to the printing press themselves. Instead, the danger lies in the likelihood that the Christian masses will have their entire life savings and livelihoods wiped out by profoundly immoral [economic idiots](#) working in collusion with government who believe that prosperity grows on trees. Again, one would think that the Christian masses would already be aware that counterfeiting money is sickeningly immoral and economically destructive, but Christians of all stripes have done virtually nothing to stand up to this form of robbery. This testifies, yet again, to the appalling stupidity of the Christian masses – even when they themselves are being victimized, and the desperate need for the Christian herd to be morally guided by the Christian churches.

One hopes that the Christian churches will begin to lay seeds in the minds of their followers that will counteract these deadly immoral trends. With economic conditions deteriorating and political "leaders" plumbing new moral depths, the need has never been greater for the Christian churches to lead their herds back to the ethical path laid by Jesus and His Father. And that means, first and foremost, that the Christian churches must do their best to stop Christians from killing and robbing other people. One shudders to think that the Christian Churches even need to be reminded of something as fundamental as this.

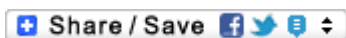
Mark R. Crovelli writes from Denver, Colorado.

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Friday, May 20, 2011

[Benjamin/Davis: Obama Should Follow His Own Advice](#)

Obama Should Follow His Own Advice on the 'Moral Force' of Non-Violence

by Medea Benjamin and Charles Davis [article link](#)

May 20, 2011 | CommonDreams

Given that President Obama daily authorizes the firing of hellfire missiles and the dropping of cluster bombs in places such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, it was awful odd seeing him wax eloquent this week about the “moral force of non-violence” in places like Egypt and Tunisia. But there he was, the commander-in-chief of the largest empire in history, praising the power of peaceful protest in countries with repressive leaders backed by his own administration.

Were we unfamiliar with his actual policies – more than [doubling the troops in Afghanistan](#), dramatically escalating a deadly [drone war in Pakistan](#) and unilaterally [bombing for peace in Libya](#) – it might have been inspiring to hear a major head of state reject violence as a means to political ends. Instead, we almost choked on the hypocrisy.

Cast beforehand as a major address on the Middle East, what President Obama offered with his [speech on Thursday](#) was nothing more than a reprisal of his 2009 address in Cairo: a lot of rhetoric about U.S. support for peace and freedom in the region contradicted by the actual – and bipartisan – U.S. policy over the past half-century of supporting ruthless authoritarian regimes. Yet even for all his talk of human rights and how he “will not tolerate aggression across borders” – yes, a U.S. president said this – Obama didn't even feign concern about Saudi Arabia's repressive regime invading neighboring Bahrain to put down a pro-democracy movement there. In fact, the words “Saudi Arabia” were never uttered.

It was that kind of speech: scathing condemnations of human rights abuses by the U.S.'s Official Enemies in places like Iran and Syria and muted criticism – if any – of the gross violations of human decency carried out by its dictatorial friends in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Yemen.

Obama predictably glossed over the reality of U.S. policy and, in an audacious attempt to rewrite history, portrayed his administration as being supportive of the fall of tyrannical governments across the Middle East and North Africa, ludicrously suggesting he had supported regime change in Hosni Mubarak's Egypt – a claim betrayed by the \$1.3 billion a year in military aid his administration provided to Mubarak's regime right up until the moment he resigned. The president's revisionism might fool a few cable news personalities (what wouldn't?) but it won't fool Egyptians, [less than one in five](#) of whom even want the closer relationship with the U.S. that Obama offered in his speech, at least one that involves more military aid and neoliberal reforms imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

And Obama's remarks shouldn't fool their primary audience: American voters.

Contrary to the rhetoric of Obama's speech, if the U.S. has sided with Middle Eastern publics against their brutal dictators it has not been because of their dictators' brutality, which in the case of Mubarak was seen as a plus in the age of the war on terror. Nor has that support for the oppressed come in the form of – hold your laughter – non-violence. Rhetoric of change aside, how best to use the liberating power of bullets and bombs continues to be the guiding principle of U.S. policy in the Middle East.

And Obama certainly isn't apologizing for that. In his speech called the war in Iraq, which conservatively speaking has [killed hundreds of thousands](#) of civilians, “costly and difficult” – and, grotesquely, “well intended” – but that was as much an acknowledgement as he was willing to make of the deadly failure of U.S. policy toward the region in recent decades. Indeed, Obama argued it was not a failure of policy but merely a failure of rhetoric, a “failure to speak to the broader aspirations of ordinary people” that had prompted the “suspicion” the U.S. pursues its own interests at the expense of those living in the countries it invades or whose dictators it supports.

But the truth of these suspicions was evident when Obama explained why the U.S.'s supposed national interests were at stake in the Middle East, claiming that “our own future is bound to this region by the forces of economics and security.” Notice which came first (and just so you know: both have to do with oil).

The president also didn't deviate from his policy of “unshakable” support for Israeli militarism, typified by his administration's efforts to safeguard the Jewish state from accountability for its war crimes in Gaza – crimes that left some [1,400 Palestinians](#) dead – and his determination to hand an already wealthy nation [more than \\$3 billion a year](#) in military aid, even as it flaunts the “peace process” and colonizes ever more Palestinian land.

Though typical of his first two years in office, Obama's duplicity was more evident – and his rhetoric more sloppy – than usual. Mere seconds after proclaiming that “every state has the right to self-defense,” Obama called for the creation of a “sovereign, non-militarized state” for Palestinians, meaning one incapable of defending itself. And while he spoke of Israeli parents fearing their children “could get blown up on a bus or by rockets fired at their homes,” he did not deign to mention the much more frequent and deadly Israeli violence perpetrated against Palestinians, saying only that the latter suffered “the humiliation of occupation,” as if Palestinian parents feel embarrassment, not pain, at the loss of a child killed by an Israeli strike.

Obama's remarks on the killing of Osama bin Laden were likewise delivered with a complete lack of self-awareness. Describing the latter as a “mass murderer,” Obama – who since taking office has the blood of hundreds of Afghan and Pakistani civilians on his hands – said bin Laden's philosophy of using bloodshed to achieve desired political changes had been discredited “through the moral force of non-violence” that has swept the region. Peaceful protests, Obama proclaimed, had “achieved more change in six months than terrorists have accomplished in decades” – and more than decades of U.S. wars and occupations, he might have added.

Talking up the virtues of peaceful protest is great and all, but the pretty words lack their power coming from the commander-in-chief of the most lethal and widely deployed military force in world history. Mr. Obama, if you want talk about the evils of violence, great – but follow your own advice.

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Charles Davis has covered Congress for NPR and Pacifica stations across the country, and freelanced for the international news wire Inter Press Service, primarily covering U.S. policy toward Latin America and the war on drugs in particular. He has also worked as a researcher for Michael Moore on his movie *Capitalism: A Love Story*.

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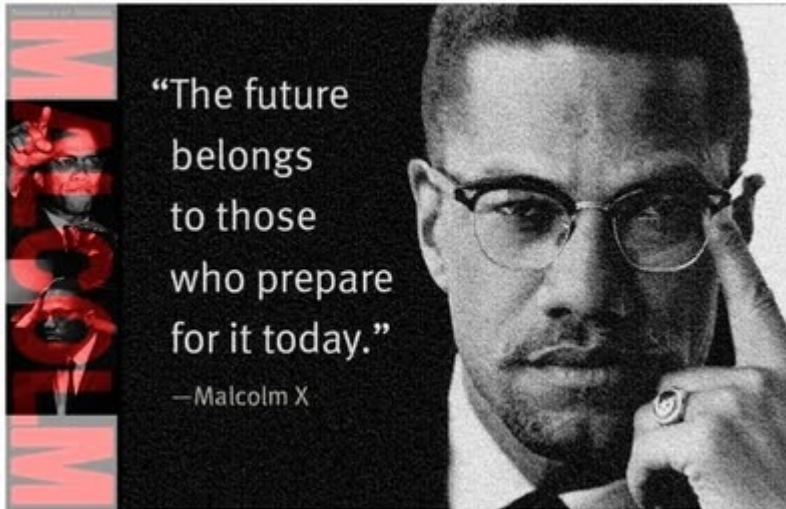
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Thursday, May 19, 2011

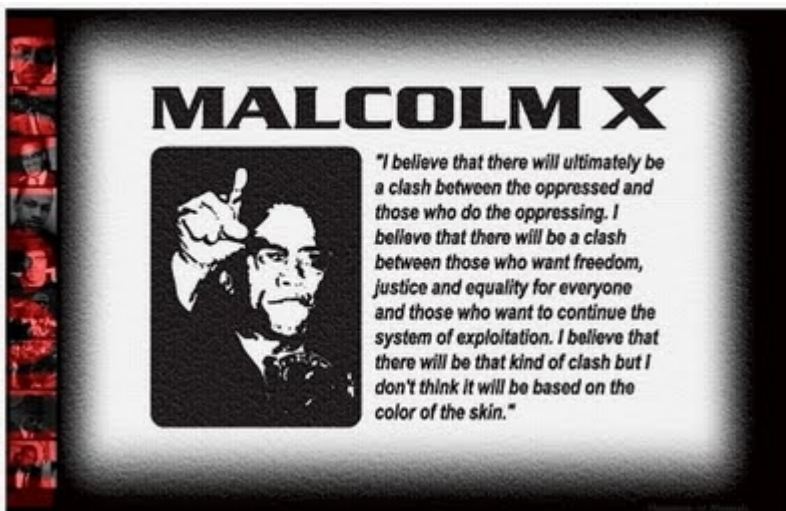
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[Steven Novotni: Rethinking the Common Good](#)

Neither capitalism nor communism, new concept protects resources

Rethinking the Common Good

by Steven Novotni [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 19, 2011 | [CommonDreams](#) | [Cincinnati City Beat](#)

The usual narrative of America's Dust Bowl years goes something like this: Midwestern farmers, driven by greed, recklessly and ignorantly wrecked the land to such a point that it became worthless. They essentially ate themselves to death.

But Raj Patel, author of *The Value of Nothing*, says it wasn't some innate, every-man-for-himself style of greed that raped the land; it was the dominant capitalist construct that was to blame.

Patel and fellow political theorist Michael Hardt recently visited Cincinnati to discuss the value of "the commons," the idea that the wealth of the planet — land, air, water and human knowledge — are not things that should be bought and sold but are, in fact, the commonwealth of all mankind.

The public dialogue was held May 12 at the University of Cincinnati.

"When one looks at reasons for the Dust Bowl, what one sees in fact is not unbridled human greed, but capitalism. Either unrestrained corporations forcing people to exploit the resources on which they depend or of state capitalism (doing the same)," Patel says.

"Everyone thinks of China's environmental problems as pandas not shagging enough," he adds. "But China's largest environmental problem is the dust storm that sweeps through every year. That dust storm is the result of incredibly bad ecological practices and farming practices. And if you can't point your finger at the capitalists, you can certainly point your finger at the state capitalists for the failure in this particular instance."

The concept of the commons is gaining interest globally because of the crises around the world where capitalism has failed. Patel describes the philosophy as "a robust, democratic and contemporary control of resources."

Hardt, a Duke University professor who co-authored the book *Commonwealth*, says these resources are ones that are distinguished from property by the characteristics of shared use and management. The economic crisis of 2008 brought into focus competing views, he says, that there is either the hegemony of privately controlled resources to the bane of public property or the rule of public property to the ill of private property.

"In this vision, the commons becomes invisible," Hardt says. "What are things outside of property relations?"

Hardt paraphrased Karl Marx, saying that capitalism has made us so stupid that we can't conceive of something being ours unless we own it.

"We can't think outside of property, or at least it's very difficult to," Hardt says.

And this lack of imagination creeps into every facet of life. Ideas, computer code, communications networks and images — which he says are essential components of the commons — are now considered central products of the capitalist economy.

Defining terms and working toward an understanding of the commons and our relationships with property and world economies is of critical importance to our survival, Hardt says. He describes the terms "freedom" and "democracy" as having lost any real meaning at all after the 2001 election of George W. Bush.

"What democracy means then is at best, regular elections among a limited choice (of candidates). In fact, in most parts of the world, democracy means you better start running because the bombs are sure to follow," Hardt says.

Likewise, Patel says, the concept of "development" has come to mean something that the rich do to people who are poor, and "democracy" has come to mean something that's done to us or that we do to others.

"Now that Obama has been elected, we have been encouraged to sit back and let Obama be the bringer of change and hope, that he will be the pizza delivery dude of change and he will bring hot, steaming change," Patel says.

“It seems to me that view of democracy roundly deserves to be mocked and that view of development deserves to be mocked.”

There are other methods for conducting democracy and development that are defined by activism, not passivity, Patel adds. And reaching for this sort of self-sovereignty is what’s needed to preserve the commons for future generations.

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Steven Carter Novotni writes for the City Beat in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Wednesday, May 18, 2011

[Man Does Not Have Just Authority To War](#)



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Tuesday, May 17, 2011

James Carroll: A Declaration of Empire

A Declaration of Empire

Proposed law would vastly expand boundaries of US military mission

by James Carroll [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 17, 2011 | CommonDreams | The Boston Globe | ICH

The House of Representatives is debating a new definition of America's military mission in the world, replacing the mandate adopted immediately after 9/11. Instead of merely authorizing the president to make war against those who "committed or aided" the 2001 attacks, the proposed National Defense Authorization Act expands the notion of America's enemy to include forces "associated" with named antagonists like Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

According to its critics (including numerous House Democrats who asked last week that such language be dropped), this seemingly innocuous expansion would, in effect, license an open-ended bleeding of the American battle away from Iraq and Afghanistan to any location in which such vaguely defined associates operate. The two present wars could become three, four, or five, and could shift from the Middle East to Africa, South Asia, or anywhere that a photo, say, of Osama bin Laden hung in the barracks.

But wait a minute. For most of a decade, the US military has already operated against an amorphous, transnational terrorist enemy under the broadest possible reading of its 9/11 authorization. Drones, cruise missiles, special-ops, and mercenary forces have hit targets with impunity well beyond the officially acknowledged battle zones. The Obama administration, otherwise so different from its predecessor, is freelancing militarily, just as the Bush administration did.

So why is an expanded mandate needed now?

Though the language in the proposed legislation simply affirms what has become White House and Pentagon practice, more than policy is at stake. The law after 9/11 made an implicit claim to global force projection based on an emergency; the new legislation would explicitly reject any time or place limitations on that force. In other words, a seemingly subtle shift marks a movement from the exceptional to the threshold of normal. There is a word for the realm into which that threshold opens: The legislation is a step toward an open declaration of American empire.

For a time in the Bush era, officials and public intellectuals promoted the idea of American empire, declaring it the duty of

the United States to maintain planet-wide dominance through military force for the sake of political order and economic well-being — not only of Americans but of the world. This virtuous purpose would make America, in a phrase of the historian Niall Ferguson, “an empire by invitation.” The arrival of terrorism as a mass threat made this hegemonic mission seem inevitable. At some point, the word “empire” fell out of fashion, even on the right. Yet the structures and ideology — and bases — of world-wide dominion reproduced themselves, and soon enough the central assumption of empires embedded itself in American consciousness — the idea that the global rules of order apply to every nation except the one that enforces them.

America’s war on terrorism, up to and including its climactic assault on the bin Laden compound, has lain bare this superpower double-standard. Washington is simply above the law. What would Americans make of pilotless drone attacks coming in from Mexico to target, say, drug kingpins holed up in mansions in the hills above San Diego? After the 1979 bombing-murder of Lord Mountbatten, what would Americans have made of British commandos launching a raid in IRA-friendly New York to kill or capture the fugitive Provo chief responsible? No such interventions would be tolerated for a moment.

Why then does Washington sponsor their equivalents elsewhere? Because that’s what empires do.

That the common good requires such exceptionalism has been so taken for granted as to not need acknowledgment, though now the Congress aims to convert informal understanding into official legislation. “Associates” beware! Bin Laden is gone, but the American war party rides high.

But is this the only way? Let’s grant that “invited” US imperialism is mainly benign (which requires leaving aside questions of unfair economic structures abroad, and dehumanizing effects of garrison culture at home). Let’s grant also that contemplated expansions of Pentagon belligerence may successfully defang terrorism (instead of sparking it).

Even so, the more far-reaching consequence of 21st-century American empire will be the final destruction of authentic internationalism — nations bound by the power of agreed democratic law, cross-border systems of checks and balances, all abiding by the same rules, mutually enforced. The destruction, that is, of the only world with a hope of real peace and justice.

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James Carroll, bestselling author of [Constantine’s Sword](#), is a columnist for the Boston Globe and a Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at Suffolk University in Boston. His newest book, [Jerusalem, Jerusalem: How the Ancient City Ignited Our Modern World](#) (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), has just been published.

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We Are at War All Over The World

by Dave Lefcourt [article link](#)

May 17, 2011 | OpEdNews

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Monday, May 16, 2011

David Swanson: Of Humans And Rights

Of Humans And Rights

by David Swanson [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 15, 2011 | Countercurrents | Global Research | OpEdNews | War Is A Crime

U.S. newspapers sometimes print what they call the total death count from one or more of our wars, and all the dead who are listed are Americans. They aren't all the Americans. They don't include contractors or suicides or various other categories of dead Americans. They certainly don't include those who died for lack of basic needs while we dumped half of our public treasury into wars.

But they also don't include anyone from that 95% of humanity that's not from the United States. In our current wars, well over 95% of the dead, even in the short-term, are from the countries where the wars are fought. Some get labeled combatants and some civilians, but they're all left out of most body counts, and when they are counted they are counted low. Our government pretends not to count them at all, and only thanks to Wikileaks do we know otherwise, that the military has counted some of them.

This may be a step up from the Vietnam War, when the deaths of Vietnamese were officially celebrated. But it's not a step all the way to considering everyone human. The dead are still dead and unmourned. The official collection of ears in Vietnam has evolved into the unofficial collection of fingers in Afghanistan. This is not the progress we ultimately need.

Some humans seem to have no business existing, even before they die. Nearly five million Iraqis have been turned into refugees by our so-called liberation of their country. To acknowledge their existence doesn't fit our narrative. The global policeman doesn't chase people out of their homes or render whole pieces of the earth's surface uninhabitable. Are the women of Fallujah, told by doctors to stop having children because so many are born with horrible defects, human? Are they as human as the British royal couple or the U.S. president's family? Do we hear about them as much? Or at all?

I recently read the script of a play dramatizing the stories of some Iraqi refugees. By doing so, common understanding would hold that I went through a process of what's called humanizing people. Five million refugees is just a number. But the story of one of them who has had specific and somewhat familiar troubles, the loss of loved ones, the loss of self-respect, and a struggle to endure, a story full of detail including the person's name, appearance, voice, manners, and personality -- well, that humanizing story makes that person and the four million nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand and nine hundred and ninety-nine others more than a number. They have all now been humanized. Or so it is commonly believed.

I don't deny that such humanization works. But I question whether we must necessarily be so incredibly obtuse that it is necessary. Do we really doubt that any human lacks a specific human story until we hear it? While we should want to know the details of others' lives, do we have to know them before we can believe that those people are human and act accordingly? I'd like to propose a definition for human being that goes in the opposite direction: A human is anyone at all, but especially those you know the least about or know the most unpleasant things about. The person least like you is the most human, and you should work hardest to get that person human rights. After all, people you know well need not be described in such general terms as "she's a human being."

Our president recently began a war for the supposed benefit of the people of Libya, ceasing to arm and support Muammar Gaddafi and switching our government's support to his opponents. To gain Saudi Arabia's backing for this humanitarian war, our government told Saudi Arabia it had our blessing to move troops into Bahrain where they would attack civilians. Were the Libyans more human than the Bahrainis? What about the Libyans whom U.S. and NATO bombs are killing? Are they less human than other Libyans? Are the Libyans on our side of the war the most human, except for the ones employing child soldiers, and the racist murderers, and the ones who fought against the United States in Iraq, and the ones we may poison with depleted uranium, but especially Khalifa Hiftar, the rebel leader who has spent the past 20 years living in Virginia near CIA headquarters with no visible means of support? And what about Libyans who try to come to Europe, or

who die of thirst and starvation on a ship while a U.S. aircraft carrier leaves them to their fate? Are they the least human Libyans? Reuters printed this headline this week: "Libya may be using migrants as weapon against EU- UN." Remember when the Pentagon viewed suicides at Guantanamo as acts of war? For Libyans and other Africans, just existing and being sent or sending oneself in the direction of Europe is an act of war. These humans are imagined into objects deployed like bullets from a gun. They disappear as human beings. And we learn nothing. If we'd known the Iraq War produced refugees, perhaps we'd have known the Libyan War would do the same. The UN Refugee Agency estimates 1,200 have died on boats fleeing the humanitarian war in Libya. Survivors say a U.S. aircraft carrier and other ships have left them to their fate.

Other humans are not erased, but rather demonized. Whole races and nations and religions of people are hated. While some back wars as humanitarian acts, others back the same wars as a way to kill evil beings. Before he dropped atomic bombs on Japan, before he became president or vice president, Harry Truman was a senator who stood up in the U.S. Senate and said that if the Germans were beating the Russians we should help the Russians, and if the Russians were beating the Germans we should help the Germans. That way, he said, more of the whole lot of them would die.

We think of the genocide committed by the Germans in their World War II camps as invented out of whole cloth. It actually built on the colonial and imperial policies and thoughts of Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, England, and the United States. Spanish murder and disease wiped out the inhabitants of the Canary Islands between 1478 and 1496, followed by the European elimination of humans from many parts of the Americas, the Pacific, and Asia. In 1829, all non-Europeans in Tasmania were concentrated in one area and hunted down. You know what the United States did to its native peoples. The term "concentration camp" had been invented by the Spanish in Cuba in 1896, used by Americans, and used by the British in the Boer War. In 1904, the Germans used it as they wiped out the Herero people of Southwest Africa.

The Nazis killed several million civilians in camps and became the model for all things evil, but the war they started killed some 70 million people worldwide, each and every one of them a human being, and each a victim of the very worst thing we've ever created: war, and this war like every war the result of years and decades of predictably dangerous decisions.

The Nazis are our model for evil, but we put their top living officials on trial in courts of law and declared, however hypocritically, that we would expect to be treated identically if charged with the same crimes in the years to come. Germany just convicted another former Nazi this week. The Nazis were evil, but human. The people our propaganda now demonizes as this month's Adolf Hitler or next month's Adolf Hitler are depicted as sub-human. Prisoners are bound and hooded and treated as animals, communicating the inability to reason with them, softening us up to accept their torture. If the President of Bahrain were demonized on our televisions for his nation's abuses of innocent people, a good many Americans would want to bomb Bahrain, despite the fact that most of the victims of our bombs would not be the demonized president. Of course, that scenario won't happen with Bahrain hosting a U.S. Naval fleet. But it happens all the time in nations that our nation's government wants to bomb, with bin Laden, Gadaffi, Hussein, Milosevic, Noriega, and many others.

We've been reduced to arguing that we should try alleged criminals in courts of law, rather than murdering them, for our own sake. We should do it to avoid lowering ourselves to what we understand as their level. We admit that they are subhuman monsters, but we prefer to give them trials because that is who we are. I don't think this is good enough. Nor do I think it takes full account of our own monstrous foreign policies. Every human is a human, even the cruel, sadistic, murderous ones. They have blood on their hands and legitimate grievances at the same time. They have caused widespread suffering, often with our government's support before it switched sides, and they have families and friends who love them at the same time. Simple-minded hatred impedes our understanding of the world and our ability to take actions that will make the world better. Rather than using crimes as excuses for wars or assassinations, we should consider adopting policies that make crime less likely and taking an approach to criminal punishment that looks at deterrence, prevention, restitution, and reconciliation, rather than immediate satisfaction of passions for vengeance regardless of the consequences.

Italy a couple of years back convicted a couple of dozen CIA agents in absentia of kidnapping a man in Italy to have him tortured in Egypt. They are all free and living in the United States. Terrorists convicted of attacks on Cuba live in Florida. Presidents Bush and Obama, who have overseen illegal wars abroad, are on the loose despite open confessions of crimes like assassination and torture. If an Italian or Cuban or Iraqi or Afghan or Pakistani death squad were to murder an

American they considered a criminal, would Americans view that as law enforcement? Would our president declare that justice had been served?

We have one standard for five percent of humanity and a different one for the other 95 percent. And when we do consider the possible ramifications of having killed a likely mass murderer like bin Laden, we still fail to consider that what we did to him with bullets we do to others with missiles all the time. Our drone war in Pakistan has been denounced as illegal by the U.N. investigator on extrajudicial killings. Five days after killing bin Laden with a gun, the United States tried to kill U.S. citizen Anwar al-Awlaki with a drone. Awlaki is an American, but a Muslim; he speaks English, but he lives abroad. So, is he a human? He has not been charged with a crime. Neither had the two people who were killed in the failed attempt to kill him. Two days before that strike, U.S. drones killed 15 people in Pakistan. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan says that 957 civilians were killed by U.S. drones there in 2010.

Drone victims may not look like humans to the drone pilots sitting comfortably thousands of miles away in Nevada or Virginia. But we have soldiers at comfortable desk jobs dying of suicide. Suicide is the number one cause of death for U.S. military participants in our wars. It may be that while our policies don't recognize all humans as humans, those executing our policies do. It may be that our double standards aren't fooling even ourselves.

We've made one set of laws for our country and another for the rest of the world. We hear a lot in Washington about Israel's sovereign right to attack Iran if it sees fit, while the idea of an Iranian sovereign right to attack someone is treated with appropriate scorn. We've packed our prisons beyond what any other country has attempted, but our political criminal class has complete immunity, and the very first representative of the Wall Street gang that has recently stripped away so much of our nation's wealth, Raj Rajaratnam, was convicted this week and is appealing. A couple of weeks ago, I merely suggested to former Senator Alan Simpson that corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes, and he flew into a rage denouncing a mythical poor man who bought four houses with nothing down. Threatening those with power leads to demonizing those without. This, too, is a problem of who counts as humans. But I'm not sure it's fooling anybody.

Are future generations whose world we are damaging as human as we are? Does the rest of the natural world get as much consideration as the humans? While we laugh at nations like Ecuador giving rights to the environment, we give rights, human rights, free speech rights (including the right to bribe electoral candidates) to corporations. Corporations have no flesh or blood at all, and we treat them better than we treat a lot of human beings, and other living things.

We have to drop racism and resist demonization. A horrible crime by a person or a small group of persons tells us nothing about a race or a religion or a nationality. We have to actively oppose fear and the manipulation it allows. We have to speak up for Muslims, for immigrants, for whistleblowers, for activists, for death row prisoners, for gays and lesbians, and for every human being who is treated as something less. This means we have to speak up, as well, for criminals, for murderers, for those we believe guilty of the most horrible crimes. They must have the right to a fair trial. They must not be placed into the box of non-humans called "enemy combatants." Murdering murderers -- not to mention using their crimes as an excuse for decades of war -- generates more hatred and more violence. Exposing and documenting, and then punishing, the crimes of murderers generates understanding, credibility, and respect.

Once we decide it's OK to abuse foreigners we don't know, it's a short step to the lawless killing of Americans who live abroad like Anwar al-Awlaki. Once we decide it's OK to strip Americans abroad of any rights, it's a short step to the lawless imprisonment and torture of an American whistleblower at home like Bradley Manning.

We have to start stepping in the other direction. Bradley Manning should be freed and honored. Anwar al-Awlaki should be given a fair trial if charged with a crime. And Dick Cheney should be given several fair trials as well.

Spanish prosecutor Baltasar Garzon is rightly honored for his efforts to enforce international laws. The internet is bringing the international pursuit of justice closer to us, and in fact humanizing humans at a pace our government can't keep up with. Our future comes out of a square in Cairo, not a drone command in Las Vegas. Today an international effort called the Stay Human Convoy leaves Tahrir Square to bring aid to the people of Gaza. Can we keep those people and ourselves part of the same humanity?

Eugene Debs showed his understanding of humanity when he said, "While there is a lower class I am in it; while there is a criminal element I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

From here on out, let's have no more celebrations of anyone's death, but on that glorious day on which our government does not kill a single human being anywhere on earth, not with guns or drones or electric chairs, then let us sing and dance in the streets.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT?

We often think of rights in terms of negative freedoms. We demand the right not to be interfered with. We want to be left free to speak and to assemble, or free to choose what we can afford from among the merchandise that corporations offer up for sale, or even free to leave our guns where our kids can accidentally get at them.

There's actually a lot to be said for the freedom to be left alone. The right not to be locked up without a swift, fair, open trial by a jury of one's peers is a crucial foundation of a decent society. Losing it, as we are losing it, is extremely frightening.

Marcus Tullius Cicero lived in a time when imperialism threatened rights, but he had a very different idea of freedom. Freedom, he said, is participation in power.

Here we are exercising our freedom of speech, but are we participating in power? After eight years of bringing democracy to Iraq, Iraq has banned public protests. We still have the right to protest, as long as we're not too close to the people we're protesting. We've been left free to assemble here today, but are we free by Cicero's definition? Unlike every other wealthy nation on earth, we Americans are left blissfully free of national health coverage. We're free to get sick and die if we take a fancy to it, and nobody can stop us, damn it. But does that make us free by Cicero's standard, or is it -- on the contrary -- evidence of our lack of freedom?

What if freedom isn't something we're born with that might be taken away, but something we have to create together? If we conceive of free speech as a right to meaningful participation in power, then the freedom to talk at a festival without police interference and to post our talks on Youtube is important, but it's just not sufficient. The majority of the speech that reaches Americans' ears and eyes through a corporate media cartel that dominates television and other news ownership is representative of the voices of a very small minority, and is in fact contemptuous of majority opinion on most political issues.

A majority of Americans wants our wars ended, wants corporations stripped of the power to buy our elections, wants the rich taxed, wants estates and investments and excessive profits taxed, wants war profiteering banned, wants Social Security and Medicare protected, wants major investment in green energy and education, wants the minimum wage raised, wants warrantless spying banned, wants voting rights restored to ex-felons, and indeed wants national health coverage for all. Tell me when you last encountered those majority views being represented as mainstream or even as respectable in a television or newspaper news report. These are views held despite, rather than because of, our communications system. And this means that most of the people holding these majority views falsely believe themselves to be in a minority. That's disempowering, not empowering, not free.

Meaningful free speech means the ability to communicate to others in significant numbers through a communications system where the popularity of an idea, rather than its acceptance by major multinational media corporations, dictates its prominence, and where a variety of views is encouraged rather than shut out. As important as the right to meaningful free speech is the right to meaningful free hearing. We're not dealing here with the right to vent or to stand on a stage and mouth off as I'm doing now. We're talking about the right to know what is happening in the world, what others are thinking, and -- in particular -- what our government is doing in our name. A right to government transparency is a necessary component of a right to free speech. So, when the ACLU defends the right of corporations to buy our elections, in the name of free speech, it is not actually defending free speech.

Our privatized military and privatized illegal spying apparatus, and all of our other privatized government services are terrific for channeling public dollars into election campaigns, but are terrible for transparency. And the current

administration, just like the last one, is the most secretive we've yet seen. We have very little idea what our government does, and when a whistleblower passes some information about what our government does to Wikileaks, our televisions tell us to vehemently defend our right to be left in the dark. We may be free to shout or curse, we may have 35 choices of prepackaged breakfast cereal at the store, we may have 113 channels of shit on the TV to choose from, but if our military is in action in 75 countries and we can't even find out which ones, we're not free. If a commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission can push through a merger between NBC and Comcast and four months later be hired as a super-well-paid lobbyist for NBC-Comcast, she may be free but the rest of us are not.

What if we go out of our way to research everything we can on the internet, and we learn some good fraction of what our government does in our name with our money, then are we halfway free? I don't think so. Exercising power, otherwise known as freedom, through a representative government means being able to have a meaningful impact on that representation. And that means more than just communication. We don't have a right to vote. People are blocked from voting because they didn't jump through hoops to register and stay registered, or because of criminal records. We don't have a right to run for elected office. No one who lacks huge amounts of money or who is unwilling to take huge amounts of money from those who have it can meaningfully run for state-wide or national office in most states. When 400 Americans have over half the country's money, participation in power is extremely concentrated too.

No one operating outside of two very large and corrupt political parties can reasonably put their name on a ballot or participate in debates or communicate through major media outlets in most state and national elections. Electronic voting machines make it impossible to verify which candidates receive how many votes. Just ask former U.S. senator Max Cleland. If you can't run for office, and nobody you know can run for office, and your U.S. representatives are supposedly going to represent 700,000 people, and none of the viable choices to represent you comes anywhere close to representing you, then you're not participating in power, no matter how much speech and knowledge you can pull together. You're not free.

And if, on top of those problems, your misrepresentatives in Washington have ceded the bulk of their power to a single individual, to whoever is president at the moment, it seems to me you're another degree removed from being free. Americans spend a lot of time cheering for and condemning politicians based on which political party they are a member of. And the two parties do disagree on cultural issues and on matters where their corporate funders have no interest or themselves disagree. But on many of the biggest questions there is beautiful bipartisan harmony, so harmonious in fact that we may not survive it. Republicans are not sure if Barack Obama was born in this country or if he might be a Muslim or a Communist or a space alien, but Republican Congressman Buck McKeon and Republican Senator John McCain are advancing legislation that would give President Obama the power to single-handedly and unconstitutionally launch just about any war and imprison just about any person. Building on the work of his 43 predecessors, President Obama has already claimed and used those powers. But legislating them won't help undo them.

The U.S. Constitution denied presidents the power to launch wars and placed that power in the Congress. In 1938 the Congress very nearly gave that power to the people, advancing an amendment that would have required a public referendum before a war could begin. Franklin Roosevelt stopped that effort. Congress hasn't declared a war since 1941, and its pretenses of being involved in such decisions have diminished over time. Obama carefully avoided any consultation of Congress before launching a war in Libya. Now McKeon and McCain want to legislate presidential war power for as long as the so-called war on terrorism lasts. In fact, they are also thereby handing presidents the power to determine how long it will last. And that of course makes it likely to last until our empire is finished.

And this is despite the war makers having just lost the scariest propaganda poster they had during the past decade. This should be the time for ending this endless war, not giving the power to enlarge it to a single person and whatever presidents follow him in that office.

I was in Afghanistan in April and spoke with a member of Parliament named Ramazan Bashardost. He described the same problems in his government that we have in ours: financial corruption, partisanship, a poor communications system, and power taken out of the legislature and concentrated in the hands of a single person. Afghans I spoke with longed for peace, but spoke first and foremost about participation. When we hear that our military may negotiate a sharing of power with the Taliban, our first thought may be that talking is better than bombing. And of course it is. But for at least some Afghans, the

first thought is "Why are these new criminals negotiating with those old criminals? Where is OUR seat at the table? When do we get to participate in shaping our own future?"

This is what people want and need all over the world. They want it and need it on almost the same level on which they want and need peace and food and water. The Iraqi people have wanted us out of their country for several years now, not because they hate us or fail to appreciate our culture, and not because they expect paradise to quickly follow our departure, but because they want power over their own country.

And by the way, the bulk of the U.S. occupation has now been withdrawn from Iraq, so give yourself some credit if you pushed for that to happen. Our pressure was so great in 2006, that the Republican leader of the Senate privately urged Bush to end that war, even while publicly talking it up.

But an occupation is not over until it's over, so get ready to raise some hell when the complete withdrawal deadline of this December 31 st is violated.

Returning to the topic of rights: Self-determination is a fundamental right, and it requires peace, almost by definition. When we bomb countries in the name of women's rights, we violate the right of women, men, and children not to be bombed, the right to exist free of that threat and to pursue additional rights without interference. There are ways in which we can help others expand their rights, and types of help that tend to be appreciated and gratefully accepted. But war is usually not one of them. Expanding women's rights around the world is the key to halting the population explosion as well as being a moral imperative for its own sake. But the people of Egypt seem to have done more for women's rights with nonviolence in a couple of weeks than the United States and NATO have done with violence in Afghanistan for 10 years.

Which brings us back to the problem that our own limited rights do not permit us to control our own government. If we did control it, we could not only relate to the rest of the world in better ways, but we could expand our rights in many ways in which we have lost them, as well as in ways that some parts of the world have developed their rights beyond what we have ever known.

I was thinking recently about some of the rights that are now threatened in the United States, because I was comparing Daniel Ellsberg and Bradley Manning. Do you all know who Dan Ellsberg is? How about Bradley Manning? If anyone doesn't, Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers documenting Vietnam War lies 40 years ago. Bradley Manning allegedly leaked evidence of war crimes in Iraq and around the world to Wikileaks. President Obama, who as a candidate said he would reward whistleblowers, instead put Manning into a solitary 6' by 12' cell where he was forced to sleep and stand at attention naked. Dan Ellsberg, in contrast, was left free on his own personal recognizance pending a civilian trial. We can't even be sure that Manning is facing a trial. He's been charged, but no trial date set. He has been held for almost a year. He was recently moved following intense protest to supposedly better conditions, but not freed or tried. President Nixon's gang tried to secretly murder Ellsberg; these were no angels. But they did not believe they could simply imprison and abuse him.

There were other differences as well. More Americans learned much more of the information that Ellsberg made public. We had a relatively good communications system back then. We had a Congress. We had relatively good courts, and courts outside the military were in play. If Manning is given a trial it will be a military trial conducted by subordinates of a commander in chief who has already declared Manning guilty. President Obama claims that Manning leaked information more highly classified than what Ellsberg leaked. The reverse is true. The information that Ellsberg leaked was more top secret than Manning's and known to a handful of people, whereas literally millions of personnel had access to what Manning allegedly leaked. That fact is perhaps most telling. Would millions of Americans have failed to do what Manning did had this happened 40 years ago? I suspect there would have been at least several Daniel Ellsbergs in that size crowd.

Our government prosecuted but failed to convict Ellsberg or the New York Times. Last week the New York Times' lawyer in the Pentagon Papers case published a letter in the Wall Street Journal arguing against prosecuting Wikileaks' Julian Assange under the Espionage Act. He wrote:

"Under the First Amendment, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange cannot be successfully prosecuted for a violation of the Espionage Act unless the publication of WikiLeaks constitutes a clear and present danger to the national security of the

U.S. This would be impossible for the government to prove. No one in the government has pointed to any particular leak that Mr. Assange or the New York Times has published as even 'damaging' national security."

Of course, laws mean what judges choose to say they mean, and nothing is so clear cut. But where would this leave Bradley Manning? Our nation now recognizes a category of person who has no right to be freed and no right to be tried. In fact, many Americans are terrified of these people. Moving Guantanamo's prisons from Cuba to Illinois would have done very little for human rights but would probably have caused some heart attacks in Illinois. Can you imagine if Osama bin Laden had been put on trial in the United States? How many terrified television viewers would have been rushed to the hospital? Would bin Laden have been permitted to air his grievances against U.S. foreign policy? Would U.S. failures to prevent the 9-11 attacks have been discussed? What about U.S. support for bin Laden in the 1980s? There was no way in the world that trial would be held, which is why we could be sure the Navy SEALs had been ordered to kill bin Laden even before that fact was reported. For similar reasons of manufactured fear, there is little chance that Manning will be released. He'd have to be put into a witness protection program if he were. So, if a case cannot be developed to prove his guilt, then what...?

And just as we routinely kill people in Pakistan with missiles but pay attention to the killing of bin Laden with a gun, just as we grow outraged at abuses of foreign prisoners that were developed in U.S. prisons, so the treatment of Bradley Manning, the isolation, the lengthy pre-trial imprisonment, is not far removed from how numerous victims of our domestic justice system are treated all the time.

The one right most clearly guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution, prior to the Bill of Rights, is the right of habeas corpus, the right not to be kidnapped or detained or imprisoned without charge and trial. This right was won by nobles from a king of England 800 years ago. Last year a Robin Hood movie gave Robin Hood most of the credit, and I'm sure audiences cheered. But we're losing this right. In 2009, President Obama stood in front of the Constitution and the Magna Carta at the National Archives and declared he would, like President Bush, imprison people indefinitely without trial. In fact, Obama would make that abuse into formal and respectable law, or what passes for law these days. He did so with an executive order on March 7th of this year.

Our Bill of Rights, such as it is, is tattered and torn. We lack meaningful freedom of the press. Protesters are preemptively detained prior to big events, or herded into so-called free-speech zones. Never go into one of those, by the way. The whole world is our free speech zone. The right against warrantless searches and seizures has been done away with in practice and now in legislation too. The Fourth Amendment requires a warrant describing specifically what is to be searched, and requires that the warrant be based on probable cause. FISA (the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) permits, and always permitted even before it was routinely violated and then amended, retroactive warrants based on the flimsiest of evidence.

Our Fifth through Seventh amendments give us the right to grand jury, due process, just compensation for property taken, protection against double jeopardy or self-incrimination, the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial local jury, to be informed of the charges against you, to confront witnesses against you, to compel witnesses in your favor to appear, and to have the assistance of counsel. These rights are being eroded through the vindictive, retributive nature of our domestic justice system as well as through the fear mongering of never-ending war. If a president puts your name on a list of enemies, and Anwar al-Awlaki is not the only American on that list right now, then these rights vanish. Nine years ago, Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee (now a federal judge for life) and Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo (now a law professor and media pundit) wrote a pair of secret memos denying an American citizen named Jose Padilla these rights on the grounds that he was guilty of various offenses. But the memos themselves served as his trial as well as his sentence; Padilla had never been charged with the crimes, much less found guilty. The new Justice Department, at President Obama's direction, has worked very hard to protect Yoo, as well as Bush, Cheney, and the rest of that gang from suits like one that Padilla brought against Yoo, and from any criminal prosecution at home or abroad.

But we need look no further than the case of Troy Davis to see the same rights substantively missing in domestic cases unrelated to charges of terrorism. A justice system that cannot correct itself and that imposes no penalties on its officials when their abuses of justice are exposed can at best provide a formal pretense of due process. I'm glad to see that the people of Georgia are protesting the injustice done and threatened against Troy Davis.

Our Constitution didn't ban the death penalty, but it was written in the 18th century and we've barely tweaked it since. Most of the world has abolished the death penalty, including Canada, Mexico, all of Central America, half of South America, all of Europe, Australia, and much of Africa and Asia, as well as some of our states. The big users of the death penalty are the United States, China, and the nations we call the Middle East. The death penalty is, of course, an action that cannot be corrected.

Our due process rights must be restored to their intended state and then expanded to include protections unavailable in the eighteenth century, including the videotaping of all interrogations and confessions.

The very few ways in which we've expanded constitutional rights in additional amendments still need upkeep as well. We have the right against slavery except as punishment for crime, but we use prison labor, including to produce our weapons and including where the prisoners are not criminals but immigrants. We buy merchandise made by slave labor and in situations very close to slave labor in distant lands, some of them U.S. territories like the Marianas Islands. Farms in this country have held immigrant workers by force and compelled them to work with no compensation. Groups like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida I know have made great progress, but they've had to work for it. Slavery should of course be banned even as a punishment for crime, and that ban should be enforced. Racial profiling, as contained in these new immigration laws, should be banned as well.

There are other rights we need added to our Constitution.

We need an individual national right to vote, allowing the creation of national uniform standards for elections, and the right to directly elect the president, vice president, and all other elected officials, and to have one's vote publicly and locally counted in a manner that can be repeated and verified if questioned (effectively requiring hand-counted paper ballots), and the right to paid time off work to vote on election day.

We need to strengthen or create some additional rights for those who find themselves within our criminal justice system, including the right to presumption of innocence until proven guilty of a crime, the right to be told the charges against you at the time of your arrest, the right not to be detained without being arrested and charged, the right to obtain and to use in court a videotape of any relevant interrogations or confessions, the right of the accused to be detained separately from those already convicted, the right of juveniles to be detained separately from adults, the right not to be imprisoned for inability to fulfill a contract, the right to a penal system aimed at reformation and social rehabilitation, and the right to compensation for false conviction and punishment.

We need, at long last, to place in our Constitution comprehensive equal rights for women, including the right to equal pay for equal work. We need comprehensive rights for all children, including the right to have their interests given primary consideration in public actions that concern them, and a ban on harmful child labor. We need a right to special care and assistance for mothers, fathers, and children, including paid maternal and family leave. We need these things much more than we need to hear anyone preaching about "family values"!

We should have a right to free education of equal high quality from preschool through college. We should have a right to decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing. We should have a right to health care of equal high quality -- a right that the state of Vermont may soon establish, if Washington, D.C., doesn't prevent it. And then watch the other 49 states scramble to catch up.

We should have the right to form and join a labor union and the right to strike, the right to employment (not to be confused with antilabor laws that go by the misleading name "right to work"), and the right to a living wage. We should have the right to basic welfare, whether employed or not. And we should have a right to a certain level of equality.

Let me explain that last one.

Surveys have found Americans' assessment of their level of happiness declining significantly. The United States contains 4.5 percent of the world's population and spends 42 percent of the world's health care expenses, and yet Americans are less healthy than the residents of nearly every other wealthy nation and a few poor ones as well. We spend more on criminal

justice and have more crime. We're richer and have more poverty. We sell the most weapons to other countries and maintain our own military so enormous that it could be cut by 85 percent and still be the world's largest. We use far more than our share of fossil fuels. Among industrialized nations, the United States is at or near the worst ranking in employment, democracy, wellbeing, food security, life expectancy, education, and percentage of the population in prison, but right at the top in military spending whether measured per capita or as a percentage of GDP or in absolute terms. When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on the military than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death he wasn't warning us. He was warning our parents and grandparents. We're the dead.

But somehow we're still kicking. And there's one statistic that may help explain these other ones. The United States is also at the top of wealthy nations in terms of wealth and income disparity. You know, up through the Korean War, we raised taxes on the wealthy and corporations to pay for wars, and then reduced those taxes for peace time. Wars are what taxes were invented for in the first place. But during the so-called global war on terror, we've slashed taxes on the wealthy and corporations, and they're still at it up in Washington, with great bipartisan cooperation. We've created an aristocracy, we've forced people to envision their futures as more bleak rather than more prosperous. Developed societies with the healthiest and longest living people, extensive research shows, are not those with the highest average wealth, but those with the greatest equality of wealth. That's not us.

There are many ways to fix this, but one proposal I like is the maximum wage. Just set the maximum wage at 10 or 20 times the minimum wage. Tax income progressively up to 100% for income above the maximum wage. The maximum wage could be increased, but only by increasing the minimum wage.

The United States could be very creative in developing new rights, but it doesn't need to be. We are currently hold-outs on international treaties agreed to by most of the rest of the world, treaties which if ratified and upheld could expand our rights and integrate us into a world community in which we respect the rights of others.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights went into effect in 1976 and has been ratified by 159 nations but not the United States. U.S. ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights included major exceptions and qualifications that rendered it toothless, and the United States has not ratified two additional protocols. The United States is the only wealthy nation that has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The United States and Somalia are the only two nations that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. And so forth.

That we are holding out as a rogue state on numerous treaties does not mean we are violating them all or that every other nation is actually complying with them. But it means we insist on the right to violate such standards if we choose. We refuse to join the other 95% of humanity on equal terms. Adopting that radically different attitude and position will be key to enriching our own rights and to establishing them as human rights rather than American rights. If we can do that, we will be inclined as well to respect the rights of non-American humans. We will be obliged not only to try to help others, but more importantly and more urgently to do no harm, to cease approaching the world through the force of war and economic exploitation. We would not just cease supporting U.S.-friendly brutal dictators when they stopped being U.S. friendly or when their people threw them out of power. We would back democracy in substance as well as in rhetoric. We would view the Arab Spring not as a threat to Pax Americana but as a welcome expansion of human rights.

Tunisia and Egypt are where we in this country should be looking for inspiration, just as nonviolent organizers there have looked to the U.S. civil rights movement.

David Swanson is the author of "War Is A Lie" and "Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union."

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Sunday, May 15, 2011

[Gerald Celente: The Falling Bottom Line](#)

The Falling Bottom Line

by Gerald Celente [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 14, 2011 | LewRockwell | The Daily Reckoning

Children are taught it and adults repeat it. In the Western world, “religion” is the knee-jerk response as to why wars in the distant past were fought. It’s any easy way to explain away complex issues. By drawing God into conflicts that are entirely man made, initiators of the violence absolve themselves of all responsibility.

Though the uprisings in the Middle East were initially, and correctly, attributed to high unemployment, widespread poverty, lack of opportunity, rising prices and rampant corruption, it would not take long for the script to change from implicating politics and economics to implicating God.

Shortly following the downfall of Hosni Mubarak, western politicians, the media and analysts sounded the alarm: “Beware, here comes the Muslim Brotherhood.” Yet, two months later, polls showed only 10 percent of Egyptians would vote for the leader of the Brotherhood as president.

And if the Brotherhood wasn’t a frightening enough group to use as a pretext to blame religion for the troubles, there was always an endless supply of faceless, nameless, Islamic extremists lurking in the shadows, waiting for the opportunity to set up Sharia Law and threaten governments around the world.

But it was not religion that sparked the conflagrations. As “the good book” has it, “money is the root of all evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10)

It was neither God nor Allah that would take the world into “The 1st Great War of the 21st Century.” It was the falling bottom line.

In 2011, all across Europe, the bottom continued to fall out of the bottom line. Like Greece and Ireland before it, the Portuguese government, after religiously vowing never to ask for a bailout, asked for a \$118 billion bailout from the European Union.

Bailouts were not gifts, but debt traps – loans at interest rates lower than the private sector but still unmanageably high. Endlessly piling new un-repayable debt on top of old un-repayable debt would not solve the underlying problem, If fact, it

would worsen it. By imposing forced austerity measures and draconian spending cuts in order to service the debt, the bailed-out nation would reduce its productive capacity and its ability to compete in the global market.

Moreover, the indebted nations would be required to privatize valuable resources and industries to service the debt, with the profits going to creditors, often in foreign countries.

In layman's terms, "bailout" is a euphemism for state sponsored loan-sharking. Precious national assets are sold at bargain basement prices to political insiders, robbing the nation of its wealth.

How did the bailouts of Portugal, Ireland and Greece figure into the Great War? It was the same bottom line issue that brought on the "Arab Spring." Apart from nationalities and languages, the provocations were the same: high unemployment, restless youth, rising prices, etc. – and, of course, corruption.

But it wasn't the stereotypical Middle Eastern-style corruption of vulgar Arab sheiks doing dirty deals behind closed doors with shifty business moguls. In Europe, corruption was refined, honorable, prudent and openly practiced. It was called "banking."

Legal, state-sanctioned European financial corruption that made more billions for billionaires and mega-millions for multi-millionaires had crashed or crippled many EU member countries.

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Gerald Celente is founder and director of [The Trends Research Institute](#), author of [Trends 2000](#) and [Trend Tracking](#) (Warner Books), and publisher of [The Trends Journal](#). He has been forecasting trends since 1980, and recently called "The Collapse of '09."

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Friday, May 13, 2011

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Siv O'Neill: The Absurd Rush To Perdition

The illusion that keeps feeding those madmen is the firm belief that they have a right to own the world, to do what they wish with the world's resources, to plunder and kill whatever and wherever they have the desire to do so and to dominate any people on the planet.

The Absurd Rush To Perdition

by Siv O'Neill [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 12, 2011 | Countercurrents | Axis of Logic

There has been a conspiracy going on for several decades now, in subterranean bunkers and in the utmost secrecy to begin with, where plans have been drawn up for how to extract for their own profit every ounce of valuable goods that the earth is harboring. How many wars will be necessary, and where? How much propaganda to fool the people into sheepish acceptance of these illegal wars? How to get the media to cooperate in this nefarious project?

This is the Project for the New American Century or PNAC – also called The New World Order. The answers to these questions was to buy up the media and to let the propaganda run full-speed, non-stop so as to draw a thick curtain over what was being done to the world in the name of the American people.

A brood of very sick people had been hatching these plans. Their ambition was to enhance the unilateral power of the U.S. Empire in cozy cooperation with the multinational corporations. Corporatism (also called Fascism) was seeing the full light of day and the goal was for the leaders to lay their hands on the most enormous amount of private wealth the planet had ever witnessed. They had no intention of letting us the people in on the secret of what was being done to us and to the world. These emotionally atrophied quasi-human beings are out to control the universe solely in order to enrich themselves.

Seemingly ignoring the most obvious facts – that the resources of the world are finite and that the destruction of the planet will be the end result – they surge ahead to seep the last drop of oil, water and nourishment out of the earth. They are totally void of what we usually consider normal human feelings. Their own enrichment, and nothing else, matters. They don't seem to care if or when the earth's resources are going to be completely dried up, so long as they have built their castle on the hill. They seem to imagine that they alone will be secure in their fortresses, even when nobody is able to get any more food out of the soil or any oil from under the earth or the oceans.

So what is then going to run the machinery that their blind march forward has created, the march towards total mechanization of every act on this earth, rendering every natural act and product superfluous? The disconnect from a realistic view of what is lying ahead of us is staggering.

We live in an age where there is only one word that seems to have any true importance: more. The predators know of no way backwards towards sanity, no way back towards regaining a way of life that has anything to do with sane living, a way of dealing with nature that does not lead to destruction. Anything that is not robotic machinery and genetically engineered agricultural and animal products is of no value to the Corpocrats. The goal of the huge corporations that these predators have built up is to dominate nature, rather than living and working at peace with nature, the way it's been done for millennia.

Forward we go until there is no more healthy soil left, no more water left for agriculture, for humans, animals or plants. Forward we go, poisoning the earth, the water, the air – and our very souls.

The only thing that has any importance at all for these half-humans, disconnected from reality and from any form of normal life, is what they consider Progress. Progress, that is, that creates money to fill their coffers. Money that can, or so they seem to think, give them the illusion that they alone will be spared when the final day of life on earth arrives. Their seeming inability to realize how their path leads to a total train wreck is mind-boggling. How can anyone at all fail to see what we are headed for?

But it is not people that these half-humans are concerned with. People just do not matter in any way, as the base for production (machines will do the job) or as mouths that have to be fed or bodies that have to be cared for. Profit is the only thing that is of any importance to these predators. They are laughingly and blindly running the train of civilization into the ground, and they are sufficiently detached from reality to fail to see that they too are onboard that train. We are in this maelstrom together.

The great illusion

The illusion that keeps feeding those madmen is the firm belief that they have a right to own the world, to do what they wish with the world's resources, to plunder and kill whatever and wherever they have the desire to do so and to dominate any people on the planet.

The masters of the world have created a web of corporations and military bases around the globe and they never hesitate to strike when they see a need for intervening murderously and greedily. Greed and gleeful killing are the two sides of the same coin. The soldiers of the Empire are never invited – they are always the intruders.

American GIs are told to kill whenever something moves and they seem to do so with great gusto. Of course, they have very carefully been indoctrinated to see non-Americans as cannon fodder, soulless subhuman beings who are better off dead.

And, maybe most important of all in the eyes of the people, their own God is far superior to the God of the invaded people. The Other religion is by definition uncivilized and evil. And so the Other is also uncivilized and evil. What they see as the only civilized religion with a God who favors their own civilized country is unquestionably the free pass they need to invade and kill indiscriminately. Reason doesn't enter into the equation.

Whenever the people of a nation – always an inferior nation of course, a subculture – takes matters in their own hands and rebels against a dictator, Washington gets in behind the scene and sorts things out so that in the end the country gets back to the same subservient status as was the rule before the rebellion. The client state is back in service to the U.S. Empire and the Corporatocracy, back to serve the insatiable hunger of the Empire for increased profit and world domination. Power is a key word. Power to make everything their own, power to kill indiscriminately, power to grab anything that glitters.

They Don't Get It

Oil makes the world go round. There is just no way the Corpocrats are going to realize that there just is not enough oil and other resources to go on with life as it was before the world began to change. Global warming and the overextension of the earth's resources have made the end of life as we know it a certainty that is just around the bend.

The ruts have been worn deep and the predators have heavy vehicles that make it seemingly impossible to get out of those ruts. Instead they dig themselves in forever more deeply. It is the flight forward (in French: 'la fuite en avant' = digging oneself in deeper), when the world should instead be turning back, looking for new solutions for the earth to continue to be the home to plants, animals and human beings. Just close your eyes and go on digging for that black gold under the surface of the earth until the whole earth crumbles and you yourself are caught inside the earthquake!

The one percent of the people on earth who lives in almost unimaginable luxury – do they know what fate the poor in the world are subjected to? Of course they know. They know just as well as you and I know. They just couldn't care less. They consider this way of things perfectly normal. It is, to them, the just way of the division of wealth – and poverty. It's just that justice is a non-word in the world of today. The obscenely wealthy are dancing cold-bloodedly at the top of the world while poor children live in almost unbelievable squalor all over the five continents, children who are weeping when they have to go to bed hungry. Thousands and thousands of children are dying every day from malnutrition[1]. Who cares? Certainly not the people who are ruining the earth at their expense.

Also, hideous diseases like Noma affect malnourished children and adults in many parts of the world – in Africa more than elsewhere, but also in Asia and South America.[2] Estimates claim that 80 - 90% of noma cases die from the disease. In a

world as flush with money as ours, such a disease should not be allowed to exist, since it has been proved to be directly linked to malnutrition. And don't even mention the words 'economic crisis'. We should all know by now that this crisis along with the rise in food prices[3] were brought about by speculation in order to further enrich the already super-rich. It was MEANT TO HAPPEN! Don't be a fool! We know perfectly well where the money is.

So let's go back to the 1% of the super-rich. What purpose does their enormous wealth serve? There is heavy-handed, non-stop propaganda going that is trying to make us believe that concentrating the wealth in a tidy group of obscenely wealthy people is necessary to keep the global economy going, to keep the corporations healthy so that more jobs can be created. Oh yes, the trickle-down theory! Of course – how could I forget? But jobs? What jobs? Where are they, those jobs? In India, China, Taiwan, Korea. (Come work in Singapore, says an ad.)

Behind this curtain of make-believe trickle-down of wealth, there is the greed that pushes the corporations into ever-increasing plunder of Third-World nations. Anything goes, not in order to save the poor in the world but to increase the profits of the Corporations.

We live in a finite world

Profit equals Progress in the minds of the Corpocrats. But the resources of the planet are finite and the time has come – in fact it is long past – for progress to become obsolete. It's simply not progress we need. We need to go into reverse.

Monster agribusiness is making family farming an economic dead-end. Farmers just don't make both ends meet and the days of sustainable small farming are gone.

Small businesses are being squeezed out because of giant businesses like Walmart, Carrefour, MacDonald, and others, that are devouring the market. These international retail giants and fast food monsters will, for instance, very likely soon make their way into the Indian market, a country that, more than most other countries I have ever known, thrives on small businesses with very little overhead costs [4]. The result will be more unemployment, further flight into the already huge slums surrounding the big cities.

It's not only the economic effects of the monstrous spreading of these giants that are causing enormous damage to cultures all over the world. It's also the complete remake of civilizations, and a centuries-old image of a country is now being sacrificed on the altar of greed. Nothing can possibly be expected to stand still, but this artificial and destructive invasion of Western huge businesses (and along with them consumerism and the rest of their gamut of Western and 'civilized' values) into the Third World, almost overnight, is as shocking to a sane mind as any other world-wide destructive change the Corporatocracy has wrought. It's the modern-day plague that will do away with the only natural way of life on earth, which is the conservation of different cultures that fit into the mold of the regions where they have their roots.

The bio-tech industry, Monsanto, Cargill, Syngenta, Bunge, et al. are all set on owning the world's food supply, destroying organic agriculture and millennia-old biodiversity. Their patented genetically engineered seeds are ruining the natural farming for foods and cotton that have been grown with great success for millennia. This invasion of bio-tech products into farming is having the most disastrous effects on the Indian way of life. Thousands of Indian farmers have committed suicide because of debts to the seed and pesticide manufacturers that had driven them to bankruptcy.[5]

In an article entitled 'Corporate Agriculture Is to Blame for the Hundreds of Thousands of Farmer Suicides in India' Tara Lohan writes in an interview with Alternet:

"Vandana Shiva[6] says industrial *agriculture* has left Indian farmers indebted and destitute, and explains how to stem the tide of suicides.[7]

"Rapid increase in indebtedness is at the root of farmers' taking their lives," she wrote recently. "Debt is a reflection of a negative economy. Two factors have transformed agriculture from a positive economy into a negative economy for peasants: the rising of costs of production and the falling prices of farm commodities. **Both these factors are rooted in the policies of trade liberalization and corporate globalization.**"

"In 1998, the World Bank's structural-adjustment policies forced India to open up its seed sector to global corporations like Cargill, Monsanto and Syngenta," Shiva wrote. "The global corporations changed the input economy overnight. Farm-saved seeds were replaced by corporate seeds, which need fertilizers and pesticides and cannot be saved. ... The shift from saved seed to corporate monopoly of the seed supply also represents a shift from biodiversity to monoculture in agriculture."

Putting the machine in reverse

The neoconservatives knew well what they were getting the world into when they were planning their diabolical scheme of what they chose to call 'free trade' and globalization and what Milton Friedman and his Chicago boys called neo-liberalism. What it really meant was the invasion of the Empire and the Multinationals into all the nooks and corners of the world that would prove profitable for the West. It simply meant devouring the third world countries for the profit of the Corporations who were going to rule the planet.

We want to take a giant step backwards, get back to the days of sustainable and biological farming, back to the days when foods were not shipped across the planet, back to the days when local businesses provided work for people and also provided the products to sell to the community, back to the days when trucking and the military were not consuming the energy that is needed for peaceful and local purposes.

We want to leave behind us the artificial global economy, created from greed and the military-financial drive for power and world-wide domination. The hydra is getting very close to ruining us and the entire planet.

Who will kill the hydra?

Notes:

[1] "Every day about 100,000 people die of malnutrition, [Jean Ziegler](#) warned ahead of World Food Day on Sunday. "The right to food is a human right," stated the special rapporteur, who will present his full report to the UN in New York on October 27. ... The chronic lack of food in sub-Saharan Africa is particularly worrying, he said. Over a third of the region's population is now considered malnourished, with numbers of underfed soaring from 88 million in 1999 to 200 million in 2001." Malnutrition killing 100,000 a day: UN (October 15, 2005)

[2] '[NOMA – The Face of Poverty](#)' – By Siv O'Neill. Axis of Logic

[3] '[How Goldman Sachs Created the Food Crisis](#)' -

[4] '[Retail giants Walmart, Carrefour](#) likely to enter Indian market'

[5] '[From the Suicide Economy to Living Economies](#)'

"...[nearly 200,000 Indian farmers](#), many of them cotton growers, [have committed] suicide since 1997"

[6] Vandana Shiva, Ph.D., is a physicist, environmentalist, feminist, science policy advocate and director of [Navdanya](#), a Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology. –

[7] '[Corporate Agriculture Is to Blame](#) for the Hundreds of Thousands of Farmer Suicides in India'

Siv O'Neill is an Axis of Logic [columnist](#), based in France. Her insightful essays are republished and read worldwide. She can be reached at siv@axisoflogic.com.

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Dedicated to Madeleine Albright, on Behalf of the Children of Iraq, whose Lives were a "Price Worth It." ("60 Minutes", 12th May 1996.)

by Felicity Arbuthnot [article link](#)

May 13, 2011 | Global Research

Global Research [home page](#)

... Lesley Stahl, said Kathy, had said, of the US., driven embargo on Iraq: "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?" Albright had responded: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price--we think the price is worth it." ...

... "Liberating" Iraq has resulted in an estimated five million orphans, one million widows, nearly five million displaced, internally and externally and an infrastructure, social distortion, medical tragedy which makes the embargo years seem mild. Between the embargo and the invasion - 1990 - 2011, higher estimates are three million dead, the unborn, new born and under fives, still paying the highest price. A "price worth it."

Happy Anniversary, Madam Albright.

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Thursday, May 12, 2011

[William J. Astore: The Crash and Burn of Old Regimes](#)

The Crash and Burn of Old Regimes

by William J. Astore [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 12, 2011 | TruthOut | TomDispatch

The killing of Osama bin Laden, "a testament to the greatness of our country" [according to](#) President Obama, should not be allowed to obscure a central reality of our post-9/11 world. [Our conflicts](#) in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Libya remain instances of undeclared war, a fact that contributes to their remoteness from our American world. They are remote geographically, but also remote from our day-to-day interests and, unless you are in the military or have a loved one who serves, remote from our collective consciousness (not to speak of our consciences).

And this remoteness is no accident. Our wars and their impact are kept in [remarkable isolation](#) from what passes for public affairs in this country, leaving most Americans with little knowledge and even less say about whether they should be, and how they are, waged.

In this sense, our wars are eerily like those pursued by European monarchs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: conflicts carried out by professional militaries and bands of mercenaries, largely at the whim of what we might now call a [unitary executive](#), funded by deficit spending, for the purposes of protecting or extending the interests of a ruling elite.

Cynics might say it has always been thus in the United States. After all, the War of 1812 was known to critics as "Mr. Madison's War" and the Mexican-American War of the 1840s was "Mr. Polk's War." The Spanish-American War of 1898 was a naked war of expansion vigorously denounced by [American anti-imperialists](#). Yet in those conflicts there was at least genuine national debate, as well as [formal declarations of war](#) by Congress.

Today's ruling class in Washington no longer bothers to make a pretense of following the letter of our Constitution -- and they sidestep its spirit as well, invoking hollow claims of [executive privilege](#) or higher callings of [humanitarian service](#) (as in Libya) or of exporting democracy (as in Afghanistan). But Libya is still torn by civil war, and Afghanistan has yet to morph into Oregon.

"Enlightened" War, Then and Now

History does not simply repeat itself, yet realities of power, privilege, and pride ensure certain continuities from the past. Consider how today's remote wars and the ways they reinforce existing power relations for a privileged and prideful elite echo a style of European warfare more than three centuries old.

Surveying the wreckage of the devastating Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), fought feverishly across Germanic territories by most of Europe, monarchs like Louis XIV of France began to seek to fight "limited" wars. These they considered more consistent with the spirit of a rational and "enlightened" age. In their hands, such wars became the sport of kings, the real-life equivalents of elaborate chess matches in which foot soldiers drawn from the lower orders served as expendable pawns, while the second or lesser sons of the nobility, fulfilling their duty as officers, proved hardly less expendable knights, bishops, and rooks.

As much as possible, the monarch and his retinue tried to keep war-making and its disruptions at a distance from thriving economic and manufacturing concerns. In many cases, in the centuries to follow, this would essentially mean exporting war to faraway, "barbaric" realms or colonies. In the process, death and destruction were outsourced to places and peoples remote from European metropolises.

In fact, this was precisely what enraged our founders: that the colonies in America had become a never-ending battleground for French and British imperial ambitions from which the colonists themselves reaped the whirlwind of war while gaining few of its benefits. A close reading of the Declaration of Independence, for instance, reveals a proto-republic's contempt for wars fought at a king's whim and guaranteed to reduce the colonists to so much cannon fodder.

Refusing to surrender the hard-fought right as British men to have a say in how they were taxed, how their families and lands were defended, and especially for what purposes they themselves fought and died, the founders forged a new nation. Given this history, it's not surprising that they granted to Congress, and not to the President, the power to declare and fund war.

In this way, a noble experiment was born, and it worked, however imperfectly, until the devastation of a new thirty years' war in Europe (better known as World Wars I and II) propelled the United States to superpower status with all its accompanying ambitions stoked by existential fears, whether of yesterday's godless communists or today's god-crazed terrorists.

Inside the Washington Beltway: The New Court of Versailles

In the eighteenth century, France was the superpower of Europe with a military that dwarfed those of its neighbors. And who dictated France's decisions to go to war? The answer: the king, his generals, and his courtiers at the Court of Versailles. In the twenty-first-century, the US celebrates its status as the world's "sole superpower" with a military second to none. And who dictates its decisions to go to war? Considering the lessons of Iraq, Afghanistan, and now Libya, the answer is no less obvious: the president, his generals, and his courtiers within the vast edifice of Washington's national security state.

France's "enlightened" wars were fought by professional armies and mercenaries, directed by a unitary executive who did as he pleased, and endured by the lower orders who had no say (even though they provided the brawn and blood). Similarly, our twenty-first century masters plunge us into their version of enlightened wars and play their version of global chess matches.

The analogy can be pushed further. In pre-revolutionary France, the First and Second Estates (the clergy and the nobility) constituted less than 2% of the population but controlled nearly all of France's wealth and power. Their unholy alliance kept the Third Estate (everyone who wasn't a churchman or a noble) under their collective thumb.

Now, consider the United States today. Our equivalent to the First Estate would be the clergy of finance and banking (the religion of the almighty dollar). Look for them in their houses of worship on Wall Street. Our Second Estate equivalent would be the movers and shakers inside Washington's Beltway. Look for them in the White House, the Pentagon, Congress, and on K Street where the lobbyists for the First Estate tend to congregate. The unholy alliance of these two estates leaves the American Third Estate -- you and me -- with the deck stacked against us.

When it comes to war, the American ruling class has relegated the members of its Third Estate alternately to the role of ["foreign legionnaires"](#) in overseas service, or silent spectators passively watching moves on the big board. These, in turn, are continually interpreted for us by retired members of the Second Estate: generals and admirals in mufti, [hired by the corporate media](#) to provide color commentary on Washington's wars.

Small wonder that today's Beltway elite is as imperious and detached as yesterday's Court of Louis XIV. A colleague of mine recently endured a short audience with some members of our Second Estate near Dupont Circle in Washington. In his words: "They were at once condescending and puzzled by 'tea party types,' as they referred to them, which was to say that they inadvertently admitted to being out of touch and were pretty okay with that. 'Look,' I finally said, 'you cannot continue to pick someone's pocket while hectoring him about how stupid and uninformed he is and then be surprised that he gets angry.'"

Whether it be unwashed "tea party types," "retarded" ([according to](#) ex-courtier Rahm Emanuel) progressives, or other members of a disgruntled American Third Estate, the Washington elites who wage war in our name simply couldn't care less what we think, just as Louis XIV and his court couldn't have cared less about their subjects' desires.

Endless "limited" wars fought for the interests of the ruling class, massive deficit spending on those wars, a refusal to recognize (or even understand) the people's growing disgruntlement, a "let them eat cake" mentality: all of this is familiar to a historian. And like those old French masters of limited war, our new masters of war are hemorrhaging legitimacy.

The Crash and Burn of Old Regimes

In isolating the American Third Estate from war -- indeed, in disengaging it from any meaningful public debate about this nation's perpetual war-making -- our rulers have conspired to advance their own interests. Yet in deciding everything of importance out of view, they have unwisely eliminated any check on their folly.

Consider again the example of pre-revolutionary Versailles. A top-heavy, remarkably dissolute, and openly parasitic bureaucracy plundered the commonweal of France in its pursuit of power and privilege. Can we not say the same of Washington today? In its [kleptocratic tendency](#) to enrich itself and its accountability-free deployment of military power globally, the American ruling class bears a certain resemblance to French kings and their courts which, in the end, drove their country to economic ruin and violent revolution.

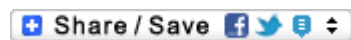
Fed up with its prodigal and prideful rulers, France saw the tumbrels roll and the guillotine blades drop. How many more undeclared "enlightened" wars, how many more trillions of dollars in war-driven debt, how many more dead and wounded will it take for the American people to reclaim their power over war? Or are we content to remain deferential to our ruling class and court -- and to their less-than-liberty-loving overseas creditors -- until such a time as their prideful wars and prodigal [trillion-dollar-plus](#) "defense" budgets bring our great democratic experiment crashing down?

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Wednesday, May 11, 2011

VIAL(S) of the Wrath of Man Poured Out Upon the Earth



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Paul Craig Roberts: Americans Are Living In 1984

Americans Are Living In 1984

By Dr. Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 10, 2011 | Global Research | Countercurrents | ICH | Silver Bear Cafe

The White House's "death of bin Laden" story has come apart at the seams. Will it make any difference that before 48 hours had passed the story had changed so much that it no longer bore any resemblance to President Obama's Sunday evening broadcast and has lost all credibility?

So far it has made no difference to the once-fabled news organization, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which on May 9, eight days later, is still repeating the propaganda that the SEALs killed bin Laden in his Pakistani compound, where bin Laden lived next door to the Pakistani Military Academy surrounded by the Pakistani army.

Not even the president of Pakistan finds the story implausible. The BBC reports that the president is launching a full-scale investigation of how bin Laden managed to live for years in an army garrison town without being noticed.

For most Americans the story began and ended with four words: "we got bin Laden." The celebrations, the sweet taste of revenge, of triumph and victory over "the most dangerous man on the planet" are akin to the thrill experienced by sports fans when their football team defeats the unspeakable rival or their baseball team wins the World Series. No fan wants to hear the next day that it is not so, that it is all a mistake. If these Americans years from now come across a story that the killing of bin Laden was an orchestrated news event to boost other agendas, they will dismiss the report as the ravings of a pinko-liberal-commie.

Everyone knows we killed bin Laden. How could it be otherwise? We--the indispensable people, the virtuous nation, the world's only superpower, the white hats-- were destined to prevail. No other outcome was possible.

No one will notice that those who fabricated the story forgot to show the kidney dialysis machine that, somehow, kept bin Laden alive for a decade. No doctors were on the premises.

No one will remember that [Fox News reported in December, 2001](#), that Osama bin Laden had passed away from his

illnesses.

If bin Laden beat all odds and managed to live another decade to await, unarmed and undefended, the arrival of the Navy SEALs last week, how it is possible that the “terror mastermind,” who defeated not merely the CIA and FBI, but all 16 US intelligence agencies along with those of America’s European allies and Israel, the National Security Council, the Pentagon, NORAD, Air Traffic Control, airport security four times on the same morning, etc. etc., never enjoyed another success, not even a little, very minor one? What was the “terror mastermind” doing for a decade after 9/11?

The “death of bin Laden” serves too many agendas that cover the political spectrum for the obvious falsity of the story to be recognized by very many. Patriots are euphoric that America won over bin Laden. Progressives have seized on the story to excoriate the United States for extra-judicial murder that brutalizes us all. Some on the left-wing bought into the 9/11 story because of the emotional satisfaction they received from oppressed Arabs striking back at their imperialist oppressors. These left-wingers are delighted that it took the incompetent Americans an entire decade to find bin Laden, who was hiding in plain view. The American incompetence in finding bin Laden simply, in their minds, proves the incompetence of the US government, which failed to protect Americans against the 9/11 attack.

Those who ordered, and those who wrote, totally incompetent legal memos that torture was permissible under US and international law, thereby setting up George W. Bush and Dick Cheney for the possibility of prosecution, are riding the euphoria of bin Laden’s death by declaring that it was torture that led the American assassins to bin Laden. All of a sudden, torture, which had fallen back into the disrepute in which it had been for centuries, is again in the clear. Anything that leads to the elimination of bin Laden is a valid instrument.

Those, who want to increase the pressure on Pakistan to shut up about Americans murdering Pakistani citizens in Pakistan from the air and from troops on the ground, have gained a new club with which to beat the Pakistani government into submission: “you hid bin Laden from us.”

Those who want to continue to fatten the profits of the military/security complex and the powers of Homeland Security, such as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, use bin Laden’s second, or ninth, death as proof that America is being successful in its war on terror and that the war must continue on such a successful path until all enemies are slain.

Most ominous of all was the statement by the CIA director that bin Laden’s death would lead to new attacks on America and new 9/11s from al Qaeda seeking revenge. This warning, issued within a few hours of President Obama’s Sunday evening address, telegraphed the inevitable “al Qaeda” Internet posting that America would suffer new 9/11s for killing their leader.

If the Taliban knew in December 2001 that bin Laden was dead, does anyone think that al Qaeda didn’t know it? Indeed, no member of the public has any way of knowing if al Qaeda is anything more than a bogymen organization created by the CIA which issues “al Qaeda” announcements. The evidence that al Qaeda’s announcements are issued by the CIA is very strong. The various videos of bin Laden for the last nine years have been shown by experts to be fakes. Why would bin Laden issue a fake video? Why did bin Laden cease issuing videos and only issue audios? A person running a world-wide terrorist organization should be able to produce videos. He would also be surrounded by better protectors than a couple of women. Where was al Qaeda, which according to former Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld, consists of “the most dangerous, best-trained, vicious killers on the face of the earth.” Had these most dangerous men alive abandoned their leader?

The CIA director’s warning of future terrorist attacks, followed by a suspect “al Qaeda” threat of the same, suggests that if the American public continues to lose its enthusiasm for the governments open-ended wars, which are conducted at the expense of the US budget deficit, the dollar’s exchange value, inflation, Social Security, Medicare, income support programs, jobs, recovery, and so forth, “al Qaeda” will again outwit all 16 US intelligence agencies, those of our allies, NORAD, airport security, Air Traffic Control, etc. etc., and inflict the world’s only superpower with another humiliating defeat that will invigorate American support for “the war on terror.”

I believe that “al Qaeda” could blow up the White House or Congress or both and that the majority of Americans would fall

for the story, just as the Germans, a better educated and more intelligent population, fell for the Reichstag Fire--as did a number of historians.

The reason I say this is that Americans have succumbed to propaganda that has conditioned them to believe that they are under attack by practically omnipotent adversaries. Proof of this is broadcast every day. For example, on March 9, I heard over National Public Radio in Atlanta that Emory University, a private university of some distinction, treated its 3,500 graduating class to a commencement address by Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security.

This is the agency that has goons feeling the genitals of young children and adults and which has announced that it intends to expand this practice from air travelers to shopping malls, bus and train stations. That a serious university invited such a low-lifer, who clearly has no respect for American civil liberty and is devoid of any sort of sense of what is appropriate, to address a graduating class of southern elite is a clear indication that the Ministry of Truth has prevailed. Americans are living in George Orwell's 1984.

For those who haven't read Orwell's classic prediction of our time, Big Brother, the government, could tell the "citizens" any lie and it was accepted unquestioningly. As a perceptive reader pointed out to me, we Americans, with our "free press," are at this point today: "What is really alarming is the increasingly arrogant sloppiness of these lies, as though the government has become so profoundly confident of its ability to deceive people that they make virtually no effort to even appear credible."

A people as gullible as Americans have no future.

Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during President Reagan's first term. He was Associate Editor of the Wall Street Journal.

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by Ted Rall [article link](#)

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by Michelle Chen [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Libyan "Humanitarian" War Creates Humanitarian Crisis

"Whether by death at sea or by lynching at the hands of U.S.-backed "rebels," the death toll among migrant workers and their families is certainly in the thousands."

by Glen Ford [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Those of Claimed Divine Right



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The SAGE: The Self-Appointed Guardian Elite



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Paul Krugman: The Unwisdom of Elites

*... what I've been hearing with growing frequency from members of the policy elite — **self-appointed wise men, officials, and pundits** in good standing — is the claim that it's mostly the public's fault ...*

A Crisis from the Top: The Unwisdom of Elites

by Paul Krugman [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 9, 2011 | CommonDreams | The New York Times

The past three years have been a disaster for most Western economies. The United States has mass long-term unemployment for the first time since the 1930s. Meanwhile, Europe's single currency is coming apart at the seams. How did it all go so wrong?

Well, what I've been hearing with growing frequency from members of the policy elite — self-appointed wise men, officials, and pundits in good standing — is the claim that it's mostly the public's fault. The idea is that we got into this mess because voters wanted something for nothing, and weak-minded politicians catered to the electorate's foolishness.

So this seems like a good time to point out that this blame-the-public view isn't just self-serving, it's dead wrong.

The fact is that what we're experiencing right now is a top-down disaster. The policies that got us into this mess weren't responses to public demand. They were, with few exceptions, policies championed by small groups of influential people — in many cases, the same people now lecturing the rest of us on the need to get serious. And by trying to shift the blame to the general populace, elites are ducking some much-needed reflection on their own catastrophic mistakes.

Let me focus mainly on what happened in the United States, then say a few words about Europe.

These days Americans get constant lectures about the need to reduce the budget deficit. That focus in itself represents distorted priorities, since our immediate concern should be job creation. But suppose we restrict ourselves to talking about the deficit, and ask: What happened to the budget surplus the federal government had in 2000?

The answer is, three main things. First, there were the Bush tax cuts, which added roughly \$2 trillion to the national debt over the last decade. Second, there were the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which added an additional \$1.1 trillion or so. And third was the Great Recession, which led both to a collapse in revenue and to a sharp rise in spending on unemployment insurance and other safety-net programs.

So who was responsible for these budget busters? It wasn't the man in the street.

President George W. Bush cut taxes in the service of his party's ideology, not in response to a groundswell of popular demand — and the bulk of the cuts went to a small, affluent minority.

Similarly, Mr. Bush chose to invade Iraq because that was something he and his advisers wanted to do, not because Americans were clamoring for war against a regime that had nothing to do with 9/11. In fact, it took a highly deceptive sales campaign to get Americans to support the invasion, and even so, voters were never as solidly behind the war as America's political and pundit elite.

Finally, the Great Recession was brought on by a runaway financial sector, empowered by reckless deregulation. And who was responsible for that deregulation? Powerful people in Washington with close ties to the financial industry, that's who. Let me give a particular shout-out to Alan Greenspan, who played a crucial role both in financial deregulation and in the passage of the Bush tax cuts — and who is now, of course, among those hectoring us about the deficit.

So it was the bad judgment of the elite, not the greediness of the common man, that caused America's deficit. And much the same is true of the European crisis.

Needless to say, that's not what you hear from European policy makers. The official story in Europe these days is that governments of troubled nations catered too much to the masses, promising too much to voters while collecting too little in taxes. And that is, to be fair, a reasonably accurate story for Greece. But it's not at all what happened in Ireland and Spain, both of which had low debt and budget surpluses on the eve of the crisis.

The real story of Europe's crisis is that leaders created a single currency, the euro, without creating the institutions that were needed to cope with booms and busts within the euro zone. And the drive for a single European currency was the ultimate top-down project, an elite vision imposed on highly reluctant voters.

Does any of this matter? Why should we be concerned about the effort to shift the blame for bad policies onto the general public?

One answer is simple accountability. People who advocated budget-busting policies during the Bush years shouldn't be allowed to pass themselves off as deficit hawks; people who praised Ireland as a role model shouldn't be giving lectures on responsible government.

But the larger answer, I'd argue, is that by making up stories about our current predicament that absolve the people who put us here there, we cut off any chance to learn from the crisis. We need to place the blame where it belongs, to chasten our policy elites. Otherwise, they'll do even more damage in the years ahead.

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Monday, May 9, 2011

[Shekinah \(shock-and-awe\): The Divine Presence](#)



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Chris Hedges: Your Taxes Fund Anti-Muslim Hatred

Your Taxes Fund Anti-Muslim Hatred

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 9, 2011 | CommonDreams | TruthDig

News personalities, politicians, self-appointed experts on the Muslim world, and law enforcement and intelligence officials, as well as the Christian right, have successfully demonized Muslims in the United States since the attacks of 2001. It is acceptable to say things openly about Muslims that could never be said about any other ethnic group. And as the economy continues to unravel, as we face the possibility of revenge attacks by Islamic extremists, perhaps on American soil, the plight of Muslims is beginning to mirror that of targeted ethnic minority groups on the eve of the war in the former Yugoslavia, or Jews in the dying days of the Weimar Republic.

The major candidates for the Republican nomination for the presidency, including Rick Santorum, Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich and Mike Huckabee, along with television personalities such as Bill Maher, routinely employ hate talk against Muslims as a way to attract votes or viewers. Right-wing radio and cable news, including Christian radio and television, along with websites such as [Jihad Watch](#) and [FrontPage](#), spew toxic filth about Muslims over the airwaves and the Internet. But perhaps most ominously—as pointed out in “[Manufacturing the Muslim Menace](#),” (pdf) a report by [Political Research Associates](#)—a cadre of right-wing institutions that peddle themselves as counterterrorism specialists and experts on the Muslim world has been indoctrinating thousands of police, intelligence and military personnel in nationwide seminars. These seminars, run by organizations such as Security Solutions International, The Centre for Counterintelligence and Security Studies, and International Counter-Terrorism Officers Association, embrace gross and distorted stereotypes and propagate wild conspiracy theories. And much of this indoctrination within the law enforcement community is funded under two grant programs for training—the State Homeland Security Program and Urban Areas Security Initiative—which made \$1.67 billion available to states in 2010. The seminars preach that Islam is a terrorist religion, that an Islamic “fifth column” or “stealth jihad” is subverting the United States from within, that mainstream American Muslims have ties to terrorist groups, that Muslims use litigation, free speech and other legal means (something the trainers have nicknamed “Lawfare”) to advance the subversive Muslim agenda and that the goal of Muslims in the United States is to replace the Constitution with Islamic or Shariah law.

“You would not expect a Democratic administration to fund right-wing groups,” Thom Cincotta, a civil liberties attorney and the author of the Political Research Associates report, told me, “and yet we continue to have hard-right, Islamophobic speakers and companies being paid taxpayer dollars to promote racist doctrines that undermine U.S. national security policy concerning Islam and the Muslim world. Policy expert after policy expert point out that framing our counterterrorism efforts as a war against Islam is a recipe for building increased resentment among Muslims, as well as a potent recruiting tool for those who would like to carry out violent attacks against us. This kind of demonizing breaks down communication between law enforcement agents and Muslim communities, which have proven to be strong allies in the rare instances of domestic extremism. Not only does it threaten to erode basic civil liberties, it threatens freedom of expression and freedom of worship.”

The effects of this campaign of racial hatred are being felt throughout the Muslim community. Those with Muslim names are routinely harassed at airports, and many who wear traditional Muslim dress report mounting cases of verbal and sometimes physical abuse. Muslim children endure taunts in schools. Muslims complain of intrusive surveillance, unconstitutional profiling and frequent mistreatment by law enforcement. The practice of Islam, especially in its traditional forms, is now viewed by many as a sign of criminal intent. And with the rise of the surveillance and security state—we now have 854,000 people working in our domestic security apparatus and 800,000 more employed as police and emergency personnel—national law is being turned into an instrument of overt repression against a religious minority.

Those making war on Islam are ignorant of the practices and beliefs of the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims. The Muslim community is not a monolith. It is composed of numerous ethnic, national, cultural and racial groups that often have little in common and in some cases are antagonistic. Of the some 6 million Muslims in the United States, only 5 to 10 percent

define themselves as religious. And those groups that express political versions of Islam—the Jamaat al-Islamiyya out of South Asia and the Salafis—are a tiny and marginalized minority.

The poison of this rhetoric was on display a few days ago when a trustee of City University of New York [blocked the playwright](#) Tony Kushner, who is Jewish, from receiving an honorary doctorate because of Kushner's criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. The trustee, Jeffrey S. Wiesenfeld, labeling Kushner "an extremist," told The New York Times that the Palestinians "who worship death for their children are not human."

I had dinner in Berkeley recently with my friend Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, an Islamic scholar and the co-founder of Zaytuna College, who has watched the steady deterioration of Muslims' civil rights since the 2001 attacks. He argues that the stereotypes employed against Muslims mirror, with a different iconography and language, the Cold War Red-baiting that dismantled the militant labor movement and ended all serious challenges to unfettered corporate capitalism. The Red-baiting disempowered a dissident segment of American society and legalized its persecution. Red-baiting turned socialists, anarchists, populists, communists and radicals, who relentlessly challenged the orthodoxies of the permanent war economy and assault on civil liberties, into pariahs and scapegoats. It worked once. It could work again.

The portrayal of Muslims as mortal enemies serves the interests of the expanding security state and the war industry, which consume half of all federal discretionary spending. The "Muslim threat" propagates the culture of fear and ensures our political passivity. Yusuf calls the attacks on American Muslim leadership and Islamic charities "Swiftboating," in reference to the right-wing smearing of John Kerry's war record when the senator was running for president in 2004. Create doubt in people's minds about the allegiances of Muslim leaders and you effectively undermine the entire community. He says these caricatures of Muslims as evil terrorists become effective tools in justifying the ongoing occupations and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the proxy wars in Yemen and Pakistan, and the suspension of basic civil liberties at home. Israel, as well as its supporters in the United States, routinely employs the same racist cant to excuse Israeli war crimes and deny the legitimate rights of Palestinians.

Nazi portrayals of Jews, Yusuf points out, bear a disturbing resemblance to modern portrayals of Muslims. The goal that some of these demagogues have, he said, especially in a time of economic collapse, is to divert widespread rage toward Muslims, just as the leadership of Serbia diverted rage toward Muslims and Croats when that nation's economy collapsed.

"I was completely humiliated by one of these Homeland Security officials at the San Francisco Airport recently," Yusuf told me. "He knew who I was. He got more and more antagonistic. He searched all my things. It was one question after another. 'Who were you visiting?' he asked. 'Where were you?' It was done in front of my wife and children. He would not let up. We had somebody else's bag who was traveling with us and who had just gone through security. He said, looking at the bag, 'What kind of a name is that, Hussani?' I said, 'It is an American name.' He looked at me and said: 'Don't get smart with me. You're a big-shot guy. You're not stupid. You know exactly what I mean. What is that? Is it an Arab name?' I said, 'Look, it could be many, many nationalities.' 'Well,' he said, 'I'm asking you about this one.' He was talking to me like this. After about 30 minutes of this, and I don't know why I was putting up with this, I guess I was hoping each time would be the last, I finally said, 'You can arrest me. You can do whatever you want. But I'm not answering another one of these inane questions.' He tossed my passport at me and said, 'Have a nice day.' And I am wondering, did he just go through one of these training seminars?"

Yusuf filed a complaint with his senator and the Homeland Security Department. Homeland Security officials told him they would investigate the matter, and that if he could notify them in advance they would escort him through the airport security line. "But," he said, "the problem with that approach is it essentially turns us into a Third World country where influential people are treated well, but others suffer the brunt of a regime's brutality if they are suspect. That's what happens when I go to countries in the Arab world. They meet me at the airport. I get treated like a VIP. But then Gulam, the little greengrocer from Peshawar, who came here as a refugee 15 years ago from the Afghani war, he gets treated like crap, because he doesn't have friends or influence. Our creed is supposed to be 'Liberty and justice for all' and that's all I want."

Yusuf tells Muslims in the United States that they should attempt to understand those who readily embrace these stereotypes. "We can't demonize those who attend rallies where they demonize us, because in the end the people who attend these rallies are also victims," he said. "They are victims of these demagogues with bully pulpits. People are scared.

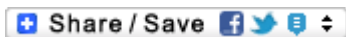
They are losing their jobs. Their mortgages have gone into foreclosure. They are angry. Demagogues always arise in these situations to use and direct anger. The Muslim community is just an easy target.”

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Chris Hedges writes [a regular column for Truthdig.com](#). Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: [War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning](#), [What Every Person Should Know About War](#), and [American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America](#). His most recent book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

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Butler Shaffer: How Perverted Have We Become?

How Perverted Have We Become?

by Butler Shaffer [article link](#)

May 9, 2011 | LewRockwell

Michael: My father is no different from any powerful man, any man with power, like a president or senator.

Kay Adams: Do you know how naïve you sound, Michael? Presidents and senators don't have men killed.

Michael: Oh, who's being naïve, Kay?

~ [The Godfather](#) (1972)

When I was in high school, one of my teachers showed the film [The Ox-Bow Incident](#). For those unfamiliar with the movie, it is a western that takes place in 19th century Nevada. Three strangers are captured by townsfolk – who had formed a posse – and accused of having murdered a local cattleman and stolen his cattle. The three are in possession of the cattle, but claim they had bought them from the owner. As the sale took place out on the range, no bill of sale accompanied the transaction. In due course, most members of the posse conclude these men were guilty of the crime, and decide to hang them, which they summarily do. Shortly thereafter, the posse meets up with the sheriff who informs them that the cattleman had been wounded, but not murdered, and that the wrongdoers who had shot him had been caught.

I recall no lengthy discussion of this film once it ended. Its message was as evident to each of us as it was to theater audiences; its meaning stood on its own. Unlike so much of the public response to the killing of Osama bin Laden, there was no post-lynching praise of the posse for having performed a community service; no bestowal of "hero" status upon the perpetrators.

Like most Americans – and, perhaps, people in general – I have no defense to make of bin Laden. Outside of his own circle of operatives, the only person I can recall who had good words to say about this man was Ronald Reagan. It was during his presidency that the U.S. government helped to create and fund Al Qaeda – with bin Laden in a leadership role – to help drive the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan. For those of you who derive your sense of history from motion pictures, you might want to watch Charlie Wilson's War. Having been established to serve American Cold War interests, when Al Qaeda's success in evicting the Soviets was no longer useful to such purposes, it pursued other foreign invaders (i.e., its creators)! Once again Boobus Americanus is confronted with Newton's "third law of motion" which, in matters political, is known to thoughtful minds as "blowback."

My criticism of bin Laden's killing has less to do with what was done to him, than with the morally depraved character of so many Americans who, once again, react to the crimes of its leaders by waving flags and chanting "USA, USA!" My children and grandchildren will have to live in – and, hopefully, not have to escape from – this country whose fate is so utterly a matter of indifference to most of their neighbors. Thanks to the influence that politics, government schools, and

the mainstream media have had in anesthetizing minds to the pain of clear, self-directed thinking, the kinds of principles that used to define the essence of American society, have become labeled "extremist ideology" or "crackpot" thinking. After all, what do such notions as "constitutional restraints," the "rule of law," "due process," "individual liberty," "privacy," "fair trials for the accused," the rejection of "torture," and other related ideas, have to do with such "real world" matters as details of the royal wedding, or the question "who will be the next American Idol?"

This is what America has become: a nation of people who accept what the Nuremberg trials declared to be the most serious of war crimes, namely, the starting of wars; people who regard "liberty" as the condition that derives from obedience to authority; for whom "justice" means nothing more than the redistribution of violence; and who are willing to accept heroes on the cheap. The official story of how bin Laden was killed has changed so many times that it remains uncertain what actually occurred. What can be distilled, at this point, is that Navy SEALs were brought to bin Laden's residence by helicopter; he was unarmed and put up no resistance; and, having been captured, was then shot and killed, and his body dumped into the sea.

It borders on the psychotic for Americans to cheer, as "heroes," men who, not defending themselves from gunfire, and having captured a now helpless old man, would then commit such a cold-blooded atrocity. Why was he not taken into custody, and allowed to stand trial for his alleged deeds? Was it preordained that, no matter the circumstances, bin Laden was not to survive his capture; that, as Noam Chomsky and others have observed, the United States did not have concrete evidence of bin Laden's responsibility for the crimes of 9/11? Was there, perhaps, the greater fear that if bin Laden – a creature of American foreign policy – were to be subjected to a public trial, the underside of such policies might be revealed; that such evidence – coupled with the revelations coming from Julian Assange and his Wikileaks organization – might prove embarrassing?

If American troops are to play the role of "hit men" for the political establishment – gunning down those who might inconvenience the purposes of statist godfathers – what are we to think of our neighbors who see such behavior as a matter of national greatness? It is now the common wisdom among the political talking-heads – whose opinions are all too common – that Obama's criminal act greatly boosts his reelection chances. Has the market for moral principles so bottomed out in this country? Is it in the dregs of human character that future historians will find the essence of 21st century America?

Nearly six years ago, British policemen tackled a young Brazilian man in a subway station on his way to work. After getting him down, he was shot five times in the head and died, for which FOX News' witless commentator, John Gibson, praised the police, adding "five in the noggin is fine." It was later revealed that the victim of this murder was innocent of any wrongdoing. In a rational world, it would be the purpose of a public trial to determine whether a suspect was guilty of a criminal offense. In whatever form a lynch-mob appears, the society that condones – or worse yet glorifies – such practices destroys itself.

Hero-worship is far too overdone in this country, and is often confused with fame. Nonetheless, those who seek heroic behavior can find it if one is discriminating in where to look for it. One can sometimes find it within the military, although such persons are often treated as pariahs. One example can be found in the U.S. Army helicopter pilot, Hugh Thompson, who came upon the systematic murdering of Vietnamese civilians at My Lai, led by Lt. Calley. When Thompson figured out what was occurring, he turned his helicopter toward the American soldiers and ordered his crew members to open fire on them should they persist in their slaughter. For his heroic act of decency, Thompson spent much of his remaining years being treated more as a villain. Boobus has been too conditioned in his support of the state to be willing to make independent judgments, particularly about anything that lays too great burden upon his mind. A more recent example of military heroism is seen in Private Bradley Manning, who has been accused of providing WikiLeaks' Julian Assange with the restricted material that Wikileaks later released. For a nation that professes to operate on democratic principles, Manning and Assange are providing the public with an essential service: a documented awareness of what its government has been doing. If anyone wants to build a monument to any of these genuine heroes, please let me know where I can send my donation!

Butler Shaffer teaches at the Southwestern University School of Law. He is the author of the newly-released [In Restraint of Trade: The Business Campaign Against Competition, 1918–1938](#) and of [Calculated Chaos: Institutional Threats to Peace and Human Survival](#). His latest book is [Boundaries of Order](#).

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[Deena Guzder: Daniel Berrigan](#)

Daniel Berrigan: A Lifetime of Peace Activism

by Deena Guzder [article link](#)

May 9, 2011 | CommonDreams

Jingoistic crowds erupted with frat-boy glee shortly after President Barack Obama announced the extrajudicial assassination of Osama Bin Laden earlier this month. After all, America’s public enemy Numero Uno -- our own veritable Darth Vader – had lost what the mainstream media depicts as a Manichean battle ten years in the making. The lone voices in the wilderness that dared to point out the covert operation violated elementary norms of international law were quickly dismissed as “fanatics”.

According to prevailing wisdom in the United States today, the best way to eradicate the world of a hateful ideology is by deploying 80 commandos on the home of an unarmed suspect and murdering him on the spot. Yet, we already see the entirely predictable consequences of the Osama bin Laden raid. In Portland, Maine, a mosque was [defaced](#) just hours after the news broke of bin Laden’s death. The graffiti read, "Osama Today, Islam tomorrow" [sic]. Less than a week later, any misconception that the so-called Global War on Terror was winding down was dispelled when a drone attack [killed](#) at least eight people in Pakistan’s North Waziristan. Meanwhile Secretary of State Hillary Clinton disingenuously conflated al-Qaeda with the Taliban and, with bellicose bravado, [declared](#) the U.S. would continue its war in Afghanistan. And, in Pakistan, hundreds of Jamaat-ud-Dawa activists [prayed](#) in Karachi for their new martyr: Osama bin Laden.

Many great minds have questioned the logic of retributive violence, but perhaps none as persistently and unwaveringly as Father Daniel Berrigan. Today, the lifelong social justice activist and renegade Jesuit priest turns 90 years old. At a time when self-proclaimed Christian politicians espouse a Tea Party-inspired theology of xenophobia and vengeance, Berrigan is a rare soul that continues tirelessly opposing violence in its many forms. Along with his late brother Phillip, he has publicly opposed aid to alleged anti-Communist forces in Southeast Asia, the use of American forces in Grenada, the installation of Pershing missiles in West Germany, aid to the Contras in Nicaragua, intervention in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion, the Cold War, and the Gulf War. Berrigan also vocally opposed the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.[1] For Berrigan, Christianity is a counter-cultural practice directly at odds with the prevailing national culture of retributive justice. Arrested more times than he can count -- but “fewer than I should have been,” Berrigan says -- he has spent over half a century digging mock graves on the Pentagon’s front lawn, pouring vials of his own blood on Capitol Hill, vandalizing army airplanes, hammering on nuclear nosecones, turning his back on judges during his sentencing hearings, staging hunger strikes in prisons, undergoing strip searches for educating his fellow inmates, and standing in court on charges ranging from “criminal mischief” to “destruction of government property” to, most egregiously, “failure to quit.” [2] Berrigan fears moral suicide over physical death and regards moral autonomy as more liberating than physical freedom.

Last year, after badgering members of the Catholic Worker community across the country, I tracked down America’s most famous living priest. When I arrived at Berrigan’s Lower West Side friary in Manhattan, I half expected to find a Bible-toting warrior, but on that clement morning, I walked into the friary’s cozy hallway to find a slightly hunched elderly man with a meek smile and skin crinkled like aluminum foil. Greeting me with the softest, gentlest “hello” that I’ve heard since my first day at Montessori school, Father Berrigan clasped my hand and led me into his tastefully decorated office. The walls of his office showcased posters of freedom fighters such as Mahatma Gandhi, a child’s drawing of a circus clown, and framed quilts of butterflies. Among his impressive collection of books are volumes by his longtime heroes: Dorothy

Day, Martin Luther King Jr., and Thomas Merton. Just shy of his ninetieth birthday, Berrigan spoke with me for an hour and a half, patiently answering my many questions and stopping only twice or so to cough.

Berrigan told me of surviving a Depression-era boyhood, an abusive father, and countless wars to emerge with a startlingly simple message: stop the violence. If Berrigan had lived during slavery, he would have fought with the abolitionists, but he would not have joined John Brown in leading violent slave insurrections. Even at the height of his Vietnam antiwar activism--or, as his detractors would say, the height of his arrogance--Berrigan never condoned violence. A tape-recorded message to the Weatherman Underground, attributed to Berrigan in 1971, pleads with the militant group to return to nonviolence, warning, "No principle is worth the sacrifice of a single human being."

In a world still wracked by violence, Berrigan's peace testimony remains largely unheard and his pacifist views are too often dismissed as naïve. As we celebrate his lifelong commitment to social justice activism on his birthday, may we remember his startlingly clear message that violence is not the answer even when it seems most tempting and most justified. As Berrigan and so many others have noted, our convictions matter most when they're tested on the crucible of life -- not when they are easy, safe, and fashionable. If we believe in a world in which international law triumphs over unilateral action; mercy triumphs over vengeance; and clemency over sacrifice then Berrigan's lifelong testimony teaches us that there are no exceptions.

Notes:

[1] Joe Sabia, "The Cornell Catholic Community is in Crisis" Cornell Daily Sun. September 23, 2003

[2] For more see Gary Smith, "Peace Warriors," The Washington Post Magazine, June 5, 1988, W22. June 5, 1988.

[Deena Guzder](#) is an independent journalist who has reported on human rights issues across the globe. She is the author of [Divine Rebels](#) (Chicago Review Press 2011), which includes a profile of Daniel Berrigan. Please visit her website: www.DeenaGuzder.com

In January 1917, Alice Stokes Paul led mass demonstrations outside of the White House demanding women's suffrage—she was imprisoned thrice in the U.S. and thrice in England, to which she responded by waging hunger strikes that were severe enough to require hospitalization. On May 4, 1961, James Zwerg participated in Freedom Rides to the segregated South and was greeted with chants of "Kill the nigger-loving son of a bitch!" as a mob of 3,000 used bats and pipes to beat the young white man nearly to death. On January 21, 1998, Roy Bourgeois was sentenced to six months in prison and fined \$3,000 for illegally entering, disrupting and trying to close down the Fort Benning U.S. Army base that trained Latin American dictators such as Bolivia's Hugo Banzer and Panama's Manuel Noriega.

The common thread connecting Paul, Zwerg, and Bourgeois is not leftist politics or anarchist leanings, but religious convictions. Paul, a Quaker, believed that all people are created with an indistinguishable "Inner Light" regardless of their gender. Zwerg, a minister in the United Church of Christ, regards his contribution to the civil rights movement as "an incredible religious experience" because he believed he was doing "God's work" when protesting segregation. Bourgeois, an ordained Catholic Priest, denounced America's support for dictatorships in Latin America and founded School of the Americas Watch, which seeks to shut down Fort Benning, in an effort to "live according to the justice and charity of Christ."

[Divine Rebels](#) chronicles the extraordinary efforts of our nation's radical souls, renegade angels, and divine rebels who agitate for a world free of racism, patriarchy, bigotry, retribution, ecocide, torture, poverty, and militarism. These social justice activists view their faith as a personal commitment with public implications; they straddle the seemingly insurmountable divide between religious zealots striving for a Christian state and secular humanists prematurely bidding good riddance to God. Their "third-way" is a religiously pluralistic modern world in which people of faith play a unique role in protecting the weak and safeguarding the sacred. While pundits speak of the "Religious Right," this is the underreported story of American Christians who are progressive because they are religious. They don't see themselves simply performing good work, but Godly work. These rabble-rousers are small in number and their efficacy is best measured on the margins, but they are part and parcel of an underreported American tradition that began with the nation's

earliest Quaker abolitionists. The activists profiled in this book believe in a community based on ethics, a world with infinite potential for improvement, and an inclusive God of love. They do not pursue political power or public approval, but the integrity of their own souls. Fearing moral suicide over physical death, these activists regard moral autonomy as more liberating than physical freedom. They sacrifice not only their own safety, but also their religious organizations' approval. By profiling social justice activists on the frontlines of the "Christian Left" since the 1950s, Divine Rebels articulates a forward-thinking alternative to both the Tea Party drone warping Christianity as well as the political left's alienating cynicism towards all religion.

Divine Rebels: American Christian Activists for Social Justice [profile page](#)
CommonDreams [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [7:59 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Sunday, May 8, 2011

[Bob Chapman: War and the Global Economic Crisis](#)

The Amercian standard of living diminishes, millions on food stamps, numbers in the poorhouse raise up, Anything goes on Wall Street, America can never pay off its debt, gold and silver to move higher still in the long run, more quantitative easing on the way, more war in the middle east.

War and the Global Economic Crisis: Collapse of the American Standard of Living

by Bob Chapman [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 7, 2011 | Global Research | International Forecaster

As the economy stumbles the American standard of living recedes. 44 million people are using food stamps and in one year that figure will be 60 million. Washington and Wall Street say, what me worry? Of course not they are the masters of the universe. We are 24 months into an inflationary depression and it still goes undiscovered. Who cares that the issuance of food stamps is up 80%, as long as the bonuses on Wall Street and in banking continue to flow and bureaucrats get higher and higher salaries and benefits? The high cost of health insurance, no longer affordable to most have increased and Medicaid users are up 17%, as the program costs increased 36%. Those on welfare rose 18%, as costs rose 24%. It is now evident to many that the choice of early retirement in the late 1990s at 52 and 59 years old was a big mistake. Many must now work into their 70s, or starve. Many retirees are forced to reenter the workforce. Recently there were 2,000 job openings and 75,000 people applied. How is that for recovery? The birth/death ratio is bogus and real unemployment is 22%. The economy needs 2 million new jobs a year and that is impossible. Good paying jobs are still being offshored and outsourced. How about the millions without jobs now for years? While all this transpires the Fed bails out Wall Street, banking and government and leaves crumbs for the dispossessed.

It always gets us when these acceptable writers use soft or euphuistic phrases to describe creeping national state socialism. The big picture is dreadful, but government, Wall Street and the media won't tell you that. Truth has nothing to do with business. They all spin one lie after another, just as you have recently seen with a certificate of live birth and the death of Mr. bin Laden. It reminds one of the old song, "Anything Goes."

Those running Washington from behind the scenes know America can never pay off and liquidate its debt. That is why there is little effort to do so. The real idea is to destroy the system. It reminds one of Argentina in 1999, before they defaulted on 2/3's of their debt only in a much bigger way. The dollar, because it is the world reserve currency, and that nations hold about 60% of foreign reserves in US dollars affects the entire world. America's Wall Street, banking and government has had a 66-year party and everyone gets to pay for it. The next step, rather than austerity, will be confiscation of all, or part, of pensions, that \$12 trillion pool of government and individual retirement funds. Needless to say, such irresponsible actions only delay the inevitable monetary collapse.

Tagging not far beyond is England and Europe, both of which have used the same template for so many years. In the US and all of these nations we see more than 50% of the population functionally illiterate and this same group country to country essentially pays little or not taxes, and receive benefits from government. That does not include the illegal alien population in each country that pays virtually no taxes. Spending far beyond tax receipts can only mean eventually that the deficits will destroy the system. That means a lower standard of living, which has already manifested itself in all three regions. Such profligacy has in the US, UK and Europe caused the Fed, the Bank of England the European Central Banks to create money and credit out of thin air monetizing buying and holding sovereign debt as well as debt clogging the balance sheets of the financial sector. In Washington the administration is considering an oil tax increase as the public pays more than \$4.00 a gallon and in Germany it's \$9.00 a gallon. Expect more of this non-income tax taxation. Each tax increase and each loss in services brings less purchasing power, as inflation rages.

All these entities each day find it harder and harder to sell bonds to support their debt load, thus, revenues have to be increased. In the US the top 10% of taxpayers will end up paying 75% of total income taxes. This has already started an exodus of high-income earners to leave the country over the past 15 years, and the numbers are increasing exponentially. That in turn throws an added burden on middle class taxpayers.

At the root of the problems of all these nations is Keynesian economics, which has become the basis for corporatist fascism. The growth of money and credit worldwide has been exponential and continues apace as nations refuse to cut spending and central banks continue to be fonts of money and credit for their financial sectors and for governments. The financial system worldwide is awash in liquidity, which is accompanied by low or near zero interest rates. If those conditions were to be higher interest rates and less monetization the world system would collapse, although governments are manipulating markets downward such as gold, silver and commodities. What they are accomplishing is very little versus the intermediate to long run. That is why in the long run gold, silver and commodities have to move higher, as investors flee the general stock and bond markets, that don't reflect the results of inflation. That is why inflation will worsen as central banks continue to spew out more money and credit, which is now euphemistically called quantitative easing. First we saw inflation rise in the developing world for a number of reasons, which has since moderated to a great extent. Inflation is growing at a realistic 4% to 6% overall. The problem lies in the developed world where real inflation runs from 8% to 20%. Nations such as the US, UK, China, India, Brazil, etc. are not only suffering high inflation, but they are exporting it as well. Not enough to keep inflation at bay in their own countries, but enough to make financial conditions in victimized countries difficult. As an example, take America's neighbors Canada and Mexico; instead of having a natural 3.5% inflation for 2011, their inflation at year-end will be 4% to 4.5%.

As we predicted a year ago, QE3 will become reality, although it will be called something else. Not only in the US, but also in the UK, Europe and other countries, as well. If the issuance of money and credit were to stop and interest rates were to rise the world would head into deflationary depression. That is why the music has to continue. Sooner or later it will stop and when it does the bottom will fall out of the world economy and financial system.

The Fed continues to create money and credit and prices continue to rise and will do so for at least 1-1/2 more years. If we get the equivalent of QE3 that will be extended 1 to 1-1/2 more years. Dependent on how big a QE3 could be two to three years ahead, inflation could range from 25% to 55%. As this affects the US economy the banking system will remain weak and near insolvency. As inflation rises in a moderate fashion in the developing world the first world will see inflation rise higher quickly.

We currently see yields on Treasuries falling again from 3.60% on the 10-year note to 3.22%, as the Fed manipulates lower yields into position. That would be in anticipation of higher real interest rates caused in reaction to QE3. This is all rear guard action to try to create employment from a sector that remains under intense pressure. Any job creation is being offset by the high layoff rates of municipal and state workers. These measures by the Fed will also continue downward pressure on the dollar and upward pressure on gold and silver and commodities. Any tightening by the government or austerity measures to reduce the fiscal deficit would be disastrous. That is if you want to keep the game going at today's level. It is a different story if you really want to solve the problem.

As we switch to the Middle East we see serious trouble coming. In fact it probably is the groundwork for World War III, the event needed from an historical prospective to begin a new world war to cover up the economic and financial collapse now taking place. Why else would the US and UK stir up rebellion in Syria, the home of a Russian naval base and in Libya where the Chinese just recently had to remove 29,000 workers due to a US and UK created rebellion. Libya supplies relatively inexpensive quality oil to China in large quantities. As these adventures unfold it becomes more obvious that a new war is being set in motion. As a reaction we see China saying they want to reduce their dollar forex position by 2/3's or by \$2 trillion. The US won't let that stop them, so China is going to be a large dollar seller and part of those funds will go in gold and silver. That means the dollar will definitely fall lower both in terms of other currencies, but more importantly versus gold and silver. Dollar bulls are very hard to find. Those negative regarding the dollar we doubt have a clue that WWIII is underway. What has come to the attention of those negative on the dollar is that the US is developing into a Nazi police state. The US government wants to know exactly where all the assets of every American are and at the same time set compliance rules on foreign banks and institutions, which have US persons as clients legally. For Americans, foreign countries have to report any real estate owned by Americans in their country and on January 1, 2013, annually these nations banks have to send 1/3rd of all bank assets to the US IRS ostensibly to pay taxes, which in most instances have already been paid. It is a grab of the assets of Americans who dare to live in another country. As a result the US government gets little or no respect outside the US. The US is a pariah and the laughing stock of the rest of the civilized world. What people other than Americans could believe the fantasies of the obviously phony "live birth certificate" and the death of a man that had already been dead for almost 10 years. The foreign opinion is that the sheeple deserve it.

As an adjunct to this the US government is going to keep US troops in Iraq beyond the end of the year. The Iraqis have to approve this action, so we'll have to see what happens. It is obvious the US has no intention of permanently withdrawing their troops. The excuse is based on the Shiite uprising in Bahrain and the massive Saudi intervention, along with events in Yemen where the dictator has agreed to leave. Iraqis believe that accommodation with Iran is the only way to coexist. They see Iran as the only real power in the region. They also recognize Iran as an emerging regional power. Thus, we see Iran balking at the US leaving 20,000 troops in Iraq.

As Iran vies for influence in Iraq so does Saudi Arabia. Both are funneling money into Iraq. Iran is the target of the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia, but it has an edge at the moment. That is because of a multiplicity of problems in Saudi Arabia itself and on its borders with Bahrain and Yemen. Thus, Saudi is in a difficult situation in trying to extend its influence into Iraq. The only real weapon the Saudis' have is money and lots of it. They cannot really pretend to be anything but a minor defensive military power. Thus, their reach is limited. As of late the US has only been of limited assistance. Naval and air solutions lack the ability to threaten Iran's center of gravity, its large ground force. The intrusions already made have been dangerous and the US lacks ground troop ability. One thing learned over the centuries of warfare is that if you conquer you have to occupy. Each place you occupy involves leaving troops that are lost to the vanguard. The US simply does not have the troops to occupy or to engage massive Iranian forces. In addition a war with Iran that probably would become WWIII, would cost trillions that the US doesn't have. As opposed to the past America's allies outside the region don't have the stomach for war, or the resources and appetite for involvement. Their militaries are skeletons of what they had in the past.

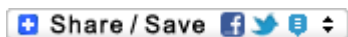
We recently saw aggressive action long planned for in the Middle East and North Africa by the US. They may be able to create turmoil and a civil war in Libya and replace one group of American dictators with another, but no substantial change will take place. What has taken place is a temporary pacification process to leave the road to Iran unfettered. The supposed execution of Osama bin Laden has definitely made matters worse in the region just to make Mr. Obama seem like he has accomplished something. These are some of the worst foreign policy moves we could ever imagine.

Bob Chapman is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Saturday, May 7, 2011

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Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet

Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet

by Derrick Jensen, Lierre Keith and Aric McBay [article link](#) [article link](#)

May 5, 2011 | CommonDreams | ClimateStoryTellers

A black tern weighs barely two ounces. On bodily reserves less than a bag of M&Ms and wings that stretch to cover twelve inches, she'll fly thousands of miles, searching for the wetlands that will harbor her young. And every year the journey gets longer as the wetlands are desiccated for human demands. Every year the tern, desperate and hungry, loses, while civilization, endless and sanguineous, wins.

A polar bear should weigh 650 pounds. Her biological reserves may have to see her through nine long months of dark, dened gestation, and then lactation, giving up her dwindling stores to the needy mouths of her species' future. In some areas, the female's weight has dropped from 650 to 507 pounds.¹ Meanwhile, the ice has evaporated like the wetlands. When she wakes, the waters will stretch impassably opened, and there is no Abrahamic god of bears to part them for her.

The Aldabra snail should weigh something, but all that's left to weigh are their skeletons, bits of orange and indigo shells. The snail has been declared not just extinct, but the first casualty of global warming. In dry periods, the snail hibernated. The young of any species are always more vulnerable. In this case, the adults' "reproductive success" was a "complete failure."² In plain terms, the babies died and kept dying, and a species millions of years old is now a pile of shell fragments.

We are living in a period of mass extinction. What is your personal carrying capacity for grief, rage, despair? The numbers stand at 120 species a day.³ That's 50,000 a year. This culture is oblivious to their passing, entitled to their every last niche, and there is no roll call on the nightly news.

We already have a name for the tsunami wave of extermination: the Holocene extinction event. There's no asteroid this time, only human behavior, behavior that we could choose to stop. Adolph Eichman's excuse was that no one told him that the concentration camps were wrong. We've all seen the pictures of the drowning polar bears. Are we so ethically numb that we need to be told this is wrong?

There are voices raised in concern, even anguish, at the plight of the earth, the rending of its species. "Only zero emissions can prevent a warmer planet," one pair of climatologists declared.⁴ Or James Lovelock, originator of the Gaia hypothesis, who states bluntly that global warming has passed the tipping point, carbon offsetting is a joke, and that "individual lifestyle adjustments" are "a deluded fantasy."⁵ It's all true. And self-evident. "Simple living" should start with simple observation: if burning fossil fuels will kill the planet, then stop burning them.

But that conclusion, in all its stark clarity, is not the one anyone's drawing, from the policy makers to the environmental groups. When they start offering solutions is the exact moment when they stop telling the truth, inconvenient or otherwise. Google "global warming solutions." The first paid sponsor, www.CampaignEarth.org, urges "No doom and gloom!! When was the last time depression got you really motivated? We're here to inspire realistic action steps and stories of success." By "realistic" they don't mean solutions that actually match the scale of the problem. They mean the usual consumer choices—cloth shopping bags, travel mugs, and misguided dietary advice—which will do exactly nothing to disrupt the troika of industrialization, capitalism, and patriarchy that is skinning the planet alive. But since these actions also won't disrupt anyone's life, they're declared both realistic and a success.

The next site offers the ever-crucial Global Warming Bracelets and, more importantly, Flip Flops. Polar bears everywhere are weeping with relief. The site's Take Action page includes the usual buying light bulbs, inflating tires, filling dishwashers, shortening showers, and rearranging the deck chairs.

The first non-commercial site is the Union of Concerned Scientists. As one might expect, there's no explanation points but instead a statement that "[t]he burning of fossil fuel (oil, coal, and natural gas) alone counts for about 75 percent of annual

CO2 emissions.” This is followed by a list of Five Sensible Steps. Step #1 is—no, not stop burning fossil fuel—but “Make Better Cars and SUVs.” Never mind that the automobile itself is the pollution, with its demands—for space, for speed, for fuel—in complete opposition to the needs of both a viable human community and a living planet. Like all the others, the scientists refuse to call industrial civilization into question. We can have a living planet and the consumption that’s killing the planet, can’t we?

The principle here is very simple. As Derrick has written, “[A]ny social system based on the use of nonrenewable resources is by definition unsustainable.”⁶ By definition, nonrenewable means it will eventually run out. Once you’ve grasped that intellectual complexity, you can move on to the next level. “Any culture based on the nonrenewable use of renewable resources is just as unsustainable.” Trees are renewable. But if we use them faster than they can grow, the forest will turn to desert. Which is precisely what civilization has been doing for its 10,000 year campaign, running through soil, rivers, and forests as well as metal, coal, and oil. The oceans are almost dead, 90 percent of the large fish devoured, and the plankton populations are collapsing, populations which both feed the life of the oceans and create oxygen for the planet. What will we fill our lungs with when they are gone? The plastics with which that industrial civilization is replacing them? Because in parts of the Pacific, plastic outweighs plankton 48 to 1.7 Imagine your blood, your heart, crammed with toxic materials—not just chemicals but physical gunk—until there was ten times more of it than you. What metaphor would be adequate to the dying oceans? Cancer? Suffocation? Crucifixion?

Meanwhile, the oceans don’t need our metaphors. They need action. They need industrial civilization to stop destroying and devouring; failing that, they need us to make it stop.

Which is why we are writing this book.

The truth is that this culture is insane. When Derrick asks his audiences, “Does anyone here believe that our culture will undergo a voluntary transformation to a sane and sustainable way of living?”—and he’s asked it for years, all around the country—no one says yes. That means that most people, or at least most people with a beating heart, have already done the math, added up the arrogance, sadism, stupidity, and denial, and reached the bottom line: a dead planet. Some of us carry that final sum like the weight of a corpse. For others, that conclusion turns the heart to a smoldering coal. But despair and rage have been declared unevolved and unclean, beneath the “spiritual warriors” who insist they will save the planet by “healing” themselves. How this activity will stop the release of carbon and the felling of forests is never actually explained. The answer lies vaguely between being the change we wish to see and a hundredth monkey of hope, a monkey that is frankly more Christmas pony than actual possibility.

Given that the culture of America is founded on individualism and awash in privilege, it’s no surprise that narcissism is the end result. The social upheavals of the 60s split along fault lines of responsibility and hedonism, of justice and selfishness, of sacrifice and entitlement. What we are left with is an alternative culture that offers workshops on our “scarcity consciousness,” as if poverty were a state of mind and not a structural support of capitalism. This culture leaves us ill-prepared to face the crisis of planetary biocide that greets us daily with its own grim dawn. The facts are not conducive to an open-hearted state of wonder. To confront the truth as adults, not as faux-children, requires an adult fortitude and courage, grounded in our adult responsibilities to the world. It requires those things because the situation is horrific and living with that knowledge will hurt. Meanwhile, I have been to workshops where global warming is treated as an opportunity for personal growth, and no one but me sees a problem with that.

The alternative culture has encouraged a continuum that runs from the narcissistic to the sociopathic. Narcissists don’t change. As one set of experts puts it, “Typically, as narcissism is an ingrained personality trait, rather than a chemical imbalance, medication and therapy are not very effective in treating the disorder.”⁸ Somewhere unarticulated, we all know that. And sociopaths can’t change. We know that, too. Which is why no one raises a hand when Derrick asks whether the culture will voluntarily transition to a sustainable way of life.

The word sustainable serves as an example of the worst tendencies of the alternative culture. The word has been reduced to the “Praise, Jesus!” of the eco-earnest. It’s a word where the corporate marketers, with their mediated upswell of green

sentiment, meshes perfectly with the relentless denial of the privileged. It's a word I can barely stand to use because it's been so exsanguinated by the cheerleaders for the technopic, consumer kingdom come. To doubt the vague promise now firmly embedded in the word — that we can have our cars, our corporations, our consumption, and our planet, too — is both treason and heresy to the emotional well-being of most progressives. But here's the question: Do we want to feel better or do we want to be effective? Are we sentimentalists or are we warriors?

Because this way of life—devouring, degrading, and insane—cannot continue. For “sustainable” to mean anything, we must embrace and then defend the bare truth: the planet is primary. The life-producing work of a million species are literally the earth, air, and water that we depend on. No human activity—not the vacuous, not the sublime—is worth more than that matrix. Neither, in the end, is any human life. If we use the word “sustainable” and don't mean that, then we are liars of the worst sort: the kind who let atrocities happen while we stand by and do nothing.

Even if it was theoretically possible to reach an individual or collective narcissist, it would take time. And time is precisely what the planet has run out of. Admitting that might be the exact moment that we step out of the cloying childishness and optimistic white-lite denial of so much of the left, and into our adult knowledge. And with all apologies to Yeats, in knowledge begins responsibilities. It's to you grown-ups, the grieving and the raging, that we address this book.

Ninety-eight percent of the population will do nothing unless they are led, cajoled, or forced. If the structural determinants are in place for them to live their lives without doing damage—like if they're hunter-gatherers with respected elders—then that's what happens. If, on the other hand, the built environment has been arranged for cars, industrial schooling is mandatory, resisting war taxes will land you in jail, food is only available through giant corporate enterprises selling giant corporate degradation, and misogynist pornography is only a click away 24/7, well, welcome to the nightmare. This culture is basically conducting a huge Milgram experiment with us, only the electric shocks aren't fake—they're killing off the planet, species by species.

But wherever there is oppression there is resistance: that is true everywhere, forever. The resistance is built body by body from the other two percent, from the stalwart, the brave, the determined, who are willing to stand against both power and social censure. It is our thesis that there will be no mass movement, not in time to save this planet our home. That two percent in other times has been able to shift both the cultural consciousness and the power structures toward justice: Margaret Mead's small group of thoughtful, committed citizens. It's valid to long for a movement, no matter how much we rationally know that we're wishing on a star. Theoretically, the human race as a whole could face our situation and make some decisions—tough decisions, but fair ones, that include an equitable distribution of both resources and justice, that respect and embrace the limits of our planet. But none of the institutions that govern our lives, from the economic to the religious, are on the side of justice or sustainability. Most of them, in fact, are violently on the side of capital-E Evil. And like with the individually destructive, these institutions could be forced to change. The history of every human rights struggle bears witness to how courage and sacrifice can dismantle power and injustice. It takes bravery and persistence, political intelligence and spiritual strength. And it also takes time. If we had a thousand years, even a hundred years, building a movement to transform the dominant institutions around the globe would be the task before us. But the earth is running out of time. The western black rhinoceros is definitely out of time. So is the golden toad, the pygmy rabbit. No one is going to save this planet except us.

So what are our options? The usual approach of long, slow institutional change has been foreclosed, and many of us know that. The default setting for environmentalists has become personal lifestyle “choices.” This should have been predictable as it merges perfectly into the demands of capitalism, especially the condensed corporate version mediating our every impulse into their profit. But we can't consume our way out of environmental collapse: consumption is the problem. We might be forgiven for initially accepting an exhortation to “simple living” as a solution to that consumption, especially as the major environmental organizations and the media have declared lifestyle change our First Commandment. Have you accepted compact fluorescents as your personal savior? But lifestyle change is not a solution as it doesn't address the root of the problem. As Derrick has pointed out elsewhere, even if every American took every single action suggested by Al Gore it would only reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 21 percent.⁹ Aric tells a stark truth: even if through simple living and rigorous recycling you stopped your own average American's annual one ton of garbage production, “your per capita

share of the industrial waste produced in the U.S. is still almost 26 tons. That's 37 times as much waste as you were able to save by eliminating a full one hundred percent of your personal waste."¹⁰ Industrialism itself is what has to stop. There is no kinder, greener version that will do the trick of leaving us a living planet. In blunt terms, industrialization is a process of taking entire communities of living beings and turning them into commodities and dead zones. Could it be done more "efficiently"? Sure, we could use a little less fossil fuel, but it still ends in the same wastelands of land, water, and sky. We could stretch this endgame out another twenty years but the planet still dies. Trace every industrial artifact back to its source—which isn't hard as they all leave trails of blood—and you find the same devastation: mining, clear cuts, dams, agriculture. And now tar sands, mountain top removal, windfarms (which might better be called dead bird and bat farms). No amount of renewables is going to make up for the fossil fuel or change the nature of the extraction, both of which are prerequisites for this way of life. Neither fossil fuel nor extracted substances will ever be sustainable: by definition they will run out. And both getting them and using them are literally the destruction of the planet. Bringing a cloth shopping bag to the store, even if you walk there in your global warming flip flops, will not stop the tar sands.

We have believed such ridiculous solutions because our perception has been blunted by some portion of denial and despair. And those are legitimate reactions. I'm not persuading anyone out of them. The question is, do we want to develop a strategy to manage our emotional state or to save the planet?

And we've believed in these lifestyle solutions because everyone around us insists they're workable, a collective repeating mantra of "renewables, recycling" that has dulled us into belief. Like Eichmann, no one has told us that it's wrong.

Until now. So this is the moment when you will have to decide. Do you want to be part of a serious effort to save this planet? Not a serious effort at collective delusion, not a serious effort to feel better, not a serious effort to save you and yours. But an actual strategy to stop the destruction of everything worth loving. If your answer feels as imperative as instinct, then you already know it's long past time to fight. After that, the only question left is: how? And despite everything you've been told by the Eichmanns of despair, that question has an answer. They have insisted that there is no answer, but that's the lie of cowards. Every system of power can be fought—they're only human in the end, not supernatural, not sent by god. Industrial civilization is in fact more vulnerable than past empires, dependent as it is on such a fragile infrastructure of pipelines and overhead wires, on binary bits of data encoding its lifeblood of capital. If we would let ourselves think it, a workable strategy is obvious, and in fact is not very different from the actions of partisan resisters across history.

So, will you think it—that one word: resistance? Will you notice that they've come for our kin of polar bears and black terns, who are right now being herded into the cattle cars of industrial civilization? Will you join the others who are yearning to action? The train can be derailed, the tracks ripped up, the bridge blown down. There is no metaphor here, as any General Officer could tell us. There is a planet being murdered, and there are also targets that, if taken out relentlessly, could stop it. So think "resistance" with all your aching heart, a word that must become our promise to what is left of this planet. Gather the others: you already know them. The brave, smart, militant, and, most of all, serious, and together take aim. Do it carefully, but do it.

Then fire for all your worth.

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[Note for readers: This essay is an excerpt from the book [Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet](#) (New York: Seven Stories Press, April 2011). We'd like to thank the authors and the publisher for preparing this excerpt for [ClimateStoryTellers.org](#).]

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Activist, philosopher, teacher, and leading voice of uncompromising dissent, **Derrick Jensen** holds degrees in creative writing and mineral engineering physics. His books include [What We Leave Behind](#) with Aric McBay; [Endgame](#) volumes 1 and 2; [As the World Burns](#) with Stephanie McMillan; [A Language Older Than Words](#); and [The Culture of Make Believe](#). Derrick Jensen has been called the philosopher poet of the environmental movement and was named one of Utne Reader's "50 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World".

Lierre Keith is a writer, small farmer, and radical feminist activist. She is the author of two novels, as well as [The Vegetarian Myth: Food, Justice, and Sustainability](#), which has been called "the most important ecological book of this generation." She's also been arrested six times. She lives in Humboldt County, California.

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The Unrenewed Debate Over Renewable Energy

Little interest in safer, cleaner, even cheaper alternatives to nuclear power
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Thursday, May 5, 2011

[Dean Henderson: The Four Horsemen Behind America's Oil Wars](#)



The Four Horsemen Behind America's Oil Wars

by Dean Henderson [article link](#)

April 26, 2011 | Global Research

While Americans are robbed at the gas pump, Exxon Mobil will this week report a 60% increase in its quarterly net profits to a cool \$10 billion. Royal Dutch/Shell will report a 30% increase.

In 1975 British writer Anthony Sampson penned *The Seven Sisters*, bestowing a collective name on a shadowy oil cartel, which throughout its history has sought to eliminate competitors and control the world's oil resource. Sampson's "Seven Sisters" name came from independent Italian oil man Enrico Mattei.

In the 1960's Mattei began negotiating with Algeria, Libya and other nationalistic OPEC states who wanted to sell their oil internationally without having to deal with the Seven Sisters. Algeria had a long history of defying Big Oil and was once ruled by President Houari Boumedienne, one of the great Arab socialist leaders of all time, who initiated the original ideas for a more just "New International Economic Order" in fiery speeches at the UN, where he encouraged producer cartels modeled on OPEC as a means to Third World emancipation.

In 1962 Mattei died in a mysterious plane crash. Former French intelligence agent Thyraud de Vosjoli says French intelligence was involved. William McHale of *Time* magazine, who covered Mattei's attempt to break the Big Oil cartel, also died under strange circumstances.

A tidal wave of mergers at the turn of the millennium transformed Sampson's Seven Sisters – Royal Dutch/Shell, British Petroleum, Exxon, Mobil, Chevron, Texaco and Gulf – into a more tightly controlled cartel which, in my book *Big Oil & Their Bankers...*, I term the Four Horsemen: Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, BP Amoco and Royal Dutch/Shell.

By the late 1800's John D. Rockefeller had become popularly known as "the Illumination Merchant" during a time when oil was powering the reading lamps of every American household. Rockefeller figured out that it was the refining of oil into various end products and not actual crude production which held the key to control of the industry.

By 1895 his Standard Oil Company owned 95% of all refineries in the US while expanding operations overseas. Summing up his attitude towards his new oil monopoly, Rockefeller once stated, "The day of combination is here to stay. Individualism is gone never to return".

Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust began illuminating the New World with funding from Kuhn Loeb and Rothschild banking families. While the Rockefellers worked the American side of the energy matrix, the Rothschilds consolidated their control over Old World oil resources.

By 1892 Shell Oil, under the direction of Marcus Samuel, began shipping South Sea crude through the new Suez Canal to supply Europe's factories. Shell took its name from the abundance of seashells which lined the shores of the Dutch-controlled archipelago that is now Indonesia. The Samuel family controls London's biggest merchant bank Hill Samuel, along with the trading house Samuel Montagu.

In 1903 the Swedish Nobel and the French Rothschild's Far East Trading – financed by King Wilhelm III – combined with Samuel and Oppenheimer's Shell Oil to form the Asiatic Petroleum Company.

In 1927 Royal Dutch Petroleum discovered oil at Seria off the coast of Brunei, whose Sultan would become the world's richest man as a result of his loyalty to Royal Dutch. The Dutch and British monarchs who control Royal Dutch merged their company with the Oppenheimer and Samuel's Shell Oil and Nobel and Rothschild's Far East Trading and Royal Dutch/Shell was born. Queen Beatrix of the Dutch House of Orange and Lord Victor Rothschild are its two largest shareholders.

In 1872 Baron Julius du Reuter was granted his 50-year concession in Iran. In 1914 the British government took control of his Anglo-Persian Company and renamed it Anglo-Iranian, then British Petroleum, then BP. Britain's House of Windsor controls a large stake in BP Amoco while the Kuwaiti monarchy owns 9.5%.

In 1906 the US government ordered the dissolution of Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust, charging that Standard violated the new Sherman Anti-Trust Act. On May 15, 1911 the US Supreme Court declared, "Seven men and a corporate machine have conspired against their fellow citizens. For the safety of the Republic we now decree that this dangerous conspiracy must be ended by November 15th".

But the breakup of Standard Oil along state lines only served to increase the wealth of the Rockefeller family, who retained 25% interest in each new company. Soon the new companies began to reintegrate.

The new Standard Oil of New York merged with Vacuum Oil to form Socony-Vacuum, which became Mobil in 1966. Standard Oil of Indiana joined with Standard Oil of Nebraska and Standard Oil of Kansas and in 1985 became Amoco. In 1972 Standard Oil of New Jersey became Exxon. In 1984 Standard Oil of California joined with Standard Oil Kentucky to become Chevron. Standard Oil of Ohio (Sohio) retained the Standard brand until it was bought by BP, which also bought trust-baby Atlantic Richfield (ARCO). Thus the Rockefellers came to own a large chunk of BP.

By 1920 Exxon, BP and Royal Dutch/Shell dominated the world's booming oil business, with the Rockefeller, Rothschild, Samuel, Nobel and Oppenheimer families, along with British and Dutch royals owning the brunt of their stock. Two other Rockefeller babies, Mobil and Chevron, weren't far behind the Big Three. The Texas Murchison family – themselves patronized by the Rockefellers – controlled Texaco, while the Mellon family – with its own ties to the Rockefeller fortune – controlled Seventh Sister Gulf Oil.

The first known attempt by the Seven Sisters to stifle competition came in 1928 when Sir John Cadman of British Petroleum, Sir Henry Deterding of Royal Dutch/Shell, Walter Teagle of Exxon and William Mellon of Gulf met at Cadman's castle near Achnacarry, Scotland. Here an agreement was reached that would divide up the world's oil reserves and markets.

The Achnacarry Agreement became known to oil industry insiders as the As Is Agreement because its aim was to maintain a status quo under which the Seven Sisters controlled the world's oil through market share agreements, sharing of refining and storage facilities, and by agreeing to limit production to keep prices high.

Big Oil signed three more agreements in the next six years. The 1930 Memorandum of Understanding for European Markets was followed by the 1932 Heads of Agreement for Distribution and the 1934 Draft Memorandum of Principles. Between 1931 and 1933 the Four Horsemen ruthlessly cut the price for East Texas crude from \$.98/barrel to \$.10/barrel. Many Texas wildcatters were run out of business. Those that remained were forced to agree to strict production quotas under threat of ruin by the majors – quotas that still exist to this day. It is these quotas, not "the environmentalists" (as the reactionary right claims) that serve to keep the US dependent on Persian Gulf oil, where Big Oil dominates the game.

By taking the oil industry international – which requires billions in capital – the Four Horsemen keep independent challenges to their hegemony at bay. They also put thousands of US oil workers out of jobs in Texas and Louisiana.

John D. Rockefeller himself did not control crude reserves. Instead he invested heavily in refining and cut deals with the Morgan-controlled railroads to cut his shipping costs. Texas wildcatters had to pay much more to ship their oil. They possessed neither the esoteric knowledge of refining crude, nor the capital to build expensive refineries. All their money was tied up in drilling rigs, which were not cheap either.

Today the Rockefeller family fortune is even more heavily invested in downstream oil operations such as petrochemicals and plastics, as well as in industries that are dependent on oil such as banking, aerospace and automobiles.

In the 1980's long-time Chase Manhattan chairman David Rockefeller invested \$35 billion in Singapore, which has since become an important refining and storage center. Royal Dutch/Shell's largest single refinery is at Pulau Bukom, Singapore.

In 1991, as the Asian Tigers began to roar, Exxon Mobil introduced unleaded gas to Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. It produces it at its giant Jurong refinery in Singapore.

The Four Horsemen have followed the money downstream. They are the world's largest refiners and marketers of crude oil in all of its various end-product forms. RoyalDutch/Shell is both the leading marketer and refiner of crude oil and is currently the source of one in ten barrels of refined product in the world. Its bottom line has benefited greatly from this downstream move with the firm showing record profits starting in 1988 and many years since. Seventy-seven percent of Shell profits now come from petrochemicals.

Shell also owns the world's largest refinery complex on the Netherlands Antilles island of Aruba, just off the Venezuelan coast. In 1991 Shell sold an outdated refinery on the neighboring island of Curacao while upgrading its Aruba facilities. The completion of this massive complex caused Venezuelan crude to become much more important to global oil supply. Crude from African nations like Nigeria and Angola is also refined at the Shell Aruba facility, which sits next to a hulking Exxon Mobil refinery named Lago, after Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo, from where most Venezuelan crude is derived.

Royal Dutch/Shell is currently focused on development of natural gas markets, investing heavily in Middle Distillate Synthesis (MDS) plants that convert liquefied natural gas to high-grade liquid products. By 1996 they had built MDS facilities in Malaysia, Nigeria and Norway. In 1993 Shell joined with Mitsubishi and Exxon Mobil in a \$3 billion natural gas project in Venezuela and launched a \$1.1 billion petrochemical expansion in Brazil. That same year BP Amoco discovered huge oilfields in neighboring Columbia.

By 1969 Exxon owned 67 oil refineries in 37 countries. Over 60% of Exxon's 1991 profits came from downstream operations. In the first quarter of that year alone, Exxon made a \$2.4 billion profit, the highest quarterly profit since Rockefeller founded Standard Oil of New Jersey in 1882. It was no coincidence that the Gulf War was being prosecuted during this time, with Exxon meeting much of the demand generated by the US military and its allies.

In the early 1990's Exxon bought the plastics division of Allied Signal and entered joint ventures with both Dow and Monsanto in the thermoplastic elastomer realm. According to Exxon Mobil's 2001 10K filing to the SEC, the company netted \$17 billion in year 2000. From 2003-2006, during the US occupation of Iraq, the company regularly broke its own record for biggest quarterly profit by any corporation in US history.

Recently the Four Horsemen have been swimming back upstream, becoming the top four retailers of gas in the US. They own every major pipeline in the world and the vast majority of oil tankers. Royal Dutch/Shell has 114 ships in its armada. Recently the company added seven giant liquefied natural gas tankers. Shell has 133,000 employees worldwide and in

1991, boasted assets of \$105 billion. Shell's Bullwinkle oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico is taller than the world's highest building.

Exxon Mobil leads the way in producing lubricant base stocks and its scientists invented butyl rubber. It has operations in 200 countries and is the only firm that operates in the harsh Beaufort Sea, where it built 19 islands of steel to drill from. Exxon owns most of the land in Yemen (5.6 million acres), Oman and Chad. Its 1991 assets totaled \$87 billion.

The latest wave of mergers in the oil industry began in the early 1960's. Eight of the top twenty-five oil companies in 1960 had merged by 1970. Exxon bought Monterey Oil and Honolulu Oil. Chevron scooped up Standard Oil of Kentucky. Atlantic Oil merged with Richfield Refining to form ARCO, which then gobbled up Sinclair. Marathon Oil bought Plymouth Refining.

Another merger wave ensued in the 1980's. Chevron bought Gulf in 1984. Texaco purchased Getty Oil. Mobil bought Superior Oil. BP grabbed both Britoil and Sohio (Standard Oil of Ohio). ARCO bought City Services. US Steel purchased Marathon Oil. The 1984 discovery of North Sea oil consolidated the position of Big Oil – especially Royal Dutch/Shell and Exxon – whose Shell Expro joint venture was awarded the prime concessions.

In 1985 Shell bought Occidental Petroleum's Columbian interests. In 1988 it took over Tenneco's assets in that country.

The 1990's saw Amoco (Standard Oil of IN) hitching its wagons to BP to form BP Amoco. In 1999 BP Amoco bought ARCO, giving the company 72% ownership of the Alaskan Pipeline.

Exxon bought Texaco Canada and Mexico's Compania General de Lubricantes in 1991. Conoco was purchased by DuPont. In March 1997, Texaco and RD/Shell merged their US refining operations.

The final and most dramatic wave of consolidation saw Exxon merge with Mobil in November 1999. That same year Chevron bought Thailand's Rutherford-Moran Oil and Argentina's Petrolera Argentina San Jorge. In July 2000 Chevron merged its petrochemical business with that of Phillips to form Chevron Phillips Chemical Company. That same year Chevron tied the knot with Texaco.

On August 30, 2002 Conoco's merger with Phillips Petroleum was approved creating Conoco Phillips, which in 2005 bought coal titan Burlington Resources. In 2002 Royal Dutch/Shell bought up previously merged Pennzoil/Quaker State as well as Britain's biggest remaining independent oil company – Enterprise Oil. In 2005 Chevron Texaco bought Unocal. And Four Horsemen rode on.

The Four Horsemen have interlocking directorates with the international mega-banks. Exxon Mobil shares board members with JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, Royal Bank of Canada and Prudential. Chevron Texaco has interlocks with Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase. BP Amoco shares directors with JP Morgan Chase. RD/Shell has ties with Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, N. M. Rothschild & Sons and Bank of England.

Former Citibank chairman Walter Shipley sat on Exxon Mobil's board, as did Wayne Calloway of Citigroup and Allen Murray of JP Morgan Chase. Willard Butcher of Chase sat on the board of Chevron Texaco. Former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan came from Morgan Guaranty Trust and served on the board of Mobil. BP Amoco director Lewis Preston went on to become president of the World Bank.

Other BP Amoco directors have included Sir Eric Drake, the #2 man at the world's largest port operator P&O Nedlloyd and a director at Hudson Bay Company and Kleinwort Benson. William Johnston Keswick, whose family controls Hong Kong powerhouse Jardine Matheson, also sat on the board of BP Amoco. Keswick's son is a director at HSBC. The Hong Kong connection is even stronger at RD/Shell.

Lord Armstrong of Ilminster sat on the boards of RD/Shell, N. M. Rothschild & Sons, Rio Tinto and Inchcape. Cathay Pacific Airlines owner and HSBC insider Sir John Swire was a director at Shell, as was Sir Peter Orr, who joins Armstrong on Inchcape's board. Shell director Sir Peter Baxendell joins Armstrong on the board of Rio Tinto, while Shell's Sir Robert Clark sits on the board of the Bank of England.

As a result of the deregulation craze in the US companies no longer have to report their top shareholders to the SEC. According to 1993 10K reports filed by the Four Horsemen, the Rothschild, Rockefeller and Warburg banking combines still control Big Oil. The Rockefellers exert control through New York mega-banks and Banker's Trust, which in 1999 was purchased by Warburg-controlled Deutsche Bank in its bid to become the largest bank in the world.

As of 1993 Banker's Trust was #1 shareholder in Exxon. Chemical Bank was #4 and J.P. Morgan was #5. Both are now part of JP Morgan Chase. Banker's Trust was also leading shareholder at Mobil. BP listed Morgan Guaranty as its biggest owner in 1993, while Amoco listed Banker's Trust as its #2 shareholder. Chevron listed Banker's Trust as its #5 shareholder, while Texaco listed J.P. Morgan as its #4 owner and Banker's Trust as #9.

Thus, Deutsche Bank and JP Morgan Chase – the banks of Warburg and Rockefeller – have increased shares in Exxon Mobil, BP Amoco and Chevron Texaco. Rothschild-controlled Bank of America and Wells Fargo exert West Coast control over Big Oil, while Mellon Bank also remains a big player. Wells Fargo and Mellon Bank were both top 10 shareholders of Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco and BP Amoco as of 1993.

Information on RD/Shell is harder to obtain since they are registered in the UK and Holland and are not required to file 10K reports. It is 60% owned by Royal Dutch Petroleum of Holland and 40% owned by Shell Trading & Transport of the UK. The company has only 14,000 stockholders and few directors. The consensus from researchers is that Royal

Dutch/Shell is still controlled by the Rothschild, Oppenheimer, Nobel and Samuel families along with the British House of Windsor and the Dutch House of Orange.

Queen Beatrix of the Dutch House of Orange and Lord Victor Rothschild are the two largest shareholders of RD/Shell. Queen Beatrix' mother Juliana was once the richest woman in the world and a patroness of the right-wing occult movement. Prince Bernhard, who married Juliana in 1937, was a member of the Hitler Youth Movement, the Nazi SS and an employee of Nazi combine I. G. Farben. He sits on the boards of over 300 European companies and founded the Bilderbergers.

When you're being robbed, it's always a good idea to be able to identify the perp. Now if only we could get the cops to bring em' in...

Dean Henderson is the [author](#) of *Big Oil & Their Bankers in the Persian Gulf: Four Horsemen, Eight Families & Their Global Intelligence, Narcotics & Terror Network* and *The Grateful Unrich: Revolution in 50 Countries*. His Blog is [Left Hook](#). Dean Henderson is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Wednesday, May 4, 2011

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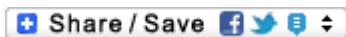
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Jim Miles: Canada Turns Hard Right

In the Wake of the Elections: Canada Turns Hard Right

by Jim Miles [article link](#) [article link](#)
May 3, 2011 | Global Research | Palestine Chronicle

On May 02, 2011, Canadian electors voted in a majority government for the former minority government of Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party. The Conservatives won 167 out of 308 possible seats, although statistically, because of Canada's "first past the post" system of electing representatives, they did not receive a majority of the "popular" vote. With a voter turnout of 60- per cent, and the popular vote of 40 per cent for the Conservatives, only 24 per cent of Canadians elected the new government.

The main issue turned out to be "stability" - not economic stability, not world stability, not peaceful stability, but stability in that Canadians did not want to have another election for as long as the mandate lasted, which in Canada is four years. Canadians as such are all for democracy if they do not have to bother with it.

The opposition for the first time ever is the New Democratic Party, a left wing party that made huge gains in the province of Quebec and smaller gains in other areas. And for the first time ever, the Green party leader, Elizabeth May, was elected in her riding, a singular counterpoint to what will become the Conservative government's ignoring issues concerning the environment.

Policies

There are significant differences in domestic policy that do not have an impact on the rest of the world. The main thrust is similar to the U.S. policies of less government, more privatization of health care and education (mainly under provincial control, but funded in part by the federal government.)

Canada's foreign policy will be affected, as the Conservatives will now turn hard to the right and follow if not increase the rhetoric and actions used by the U.S. in its foreign policy. Canada has generally followed the U.S. lead with some minor diversionary arguments to help Canadians feel that they are an independent country. However, most of Canada's economy is tied to the U.S. economy, and most of its foreign policy reflects that of the U.S.

Environment

Canada advertises itself as a green country, the great outdoors to come and explore, with vast regions of wilderness and adventure. On environmental issues the government is distinctly on the side of the large corporations, meaning there may be some lip service paid to the environment, but the real thrust will be towards resource extraction for other countries and corporations profit and benefit. The Harper Conservatives have argued that they are "aligning" our policies with those of the U.S., essentially meaning that any current environmental laws will tend to be ignored, removed, or watered down.

The Alberta tar sands are the biggest most obvious issue. Requiring huge amounts of water and other energy (natural gas) in order to extract the oil residues, the tar sands have become the oil corporations best 'safe' reserves. After the lengthy sand scrubbing process, much of the tar sands by-products are then transported to the U.S. after being reconstituted into a form of crude. Under the NAFTA agreement (free trade between Mexico, the U.S. and Canada) the U.S. government has first rights to the oil before Canada gets any remaining share under circumstances of oil shortages. Mexico at least was smart enough to protect its oil resources.

Foreign policy militarization

Foreign policy for Canada, as witnessed by the tar sands and NAFTA, is very much in line with U.S. foreign policy. In the first part of the Twentieth Century, Canada followed Great Britain's global imperial lead, following on their imperial history of creating Canada to protect its own interests at the expense of the French, the nascent U.S. empire, and of course the indigenous population of Canada. As the U.S. became Canada's lead trading partner and the global imperial leader, Canada followed, often projecting an image of the peaceable kingdom, but more frequently acting in full support of U.S. initiatives. (see Yves Engler, *The Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy*, Fernwood/RED Publishing, 2009)

Currently Canada's military supports U.S. actions in the Indian Ocean, Afghanistan, Haiti, more recently in Libya, and in Palestine/Israel. The Harper government is intent on purchasing sixty five of the Lockheed Martin F-35 joint strike fighter plane. Canada has no need of this plane unless it intends to support U.S. actions overseas, as there is nobody in the world capable of attacking Canada in a manner requiring Canada's use of the F-35. Its main beneficiary, apart from the support given to U.S. foreign policy actions, is to the corporate businesses that make the fighter. Many Canadian companies are complicit with U.S. companies in the manufacture of armaments and technological items used for warfare. These companies will benefit financially from the government largesse in purchasing these weapons.

The price is huge, especially when considered against the squabbling about the mere hundreds of millions of dollars accounted for health care and education. The original sticker price of \$75 million per plane is indicated to really be much greater, as "Kevin Page, the parliamentary budget officer...estimated in March that the sticker price for the radar-evading plane would be more like \$148 million apiece." To maintain the planes, a "new Pentagon report suggests Canada could pay up to \$24 billion over 30 years to maintain 65 planes." (CBC.ca, April 26, 2011). The total cost - and these costs as witnessed by U.S. experience always tend to increase even more significantly than projected - of \$33 billion is a wonder when the government is calling for fiscal restraint.

What it really amounts to is the slow militarization of the Canadian economy in line with the U.S. economy, as that is

where the major manufacturing profits are made in this era of market financialization. It also suits Harper's agenda of creating "courageous warriors" for projecting Canada's power on the international scene.

Palestine/Israel

That power is fully aligned with U.S. power and initiatives. Canada has always supported Israel in its fight against the Palestinians, even more so at times than the U.S. government. Canada was the first, before the U.S., to denounce the democratic election of Hamas in Palestinian elections in 2006. Canadian ignorance refuses to recognize that by drawing the extremists into power, there is a necessity to moderate and accommodate policies in order to both retain power and to provide services for the citizens. This has been well evidenced by situations in Ireland, and South Africa as the best examples, but also is shown with the rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon, who have never attacked another country.

The Canadian government creates the same fear of terrorism as the U.S. The Palestinians are considered intruders into their own land, while the Israeli's are granted their supposed god-given right to inhabit the land regardless of who resided there most recently and over a long historical period. Canada supports the Israeli line of "we are the victims" while the Palestinians are the 'perpetrators' of all the violence.

The world can expect, now that the government has a majority, more policies that support both U.S. and Israeli initiatives around the world, economically and militarily - recognizing that the two are well entwined. They may not be broadcast as such, but worded in more carefully phrased rhetoric or rhetoric disguised in a similar manner as the U.S. freedom and democracy agendas are phrased in the U.S.

Concluding Remarks

Generally, the trend for Canadian foreign policy will be a strengthening of its supposedly independent hard line approach to 'terror' in support of U.S. policies. Canada is not strictly a sycophantic follower of the U.S. as it inherited a great deal of its underlying ethos from the British imperial system. Canadians pretend to be much more worldly and compassionate, but with the Conservatives receiving only 24 per cent of the actual voting populations support, what is really reflected is a comfortable complacency with the status quo combined with an underlying wilful ignorance of some of the main global problems of today.

Jim Miles is a frequent contributor to Global Research. He is a Canadian educator and a regular contributor/columnist of opinion pieces and book reviews for The Palestine Chronicle. Miles' work is also presented globally through other alternative websites and news publications.

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David Swanson: Killing Resolves Nothing

Killing Resolves Nothing

by David Swanson [article link](#)

May 2, 2011 | OpEdNews

The plane I was on landed in Washington, D.C., Sunday night, and the pilot came on the intercom to tell everyone to celebrate: our government had killed Osama bin Laden. This was better than winning the Super Bowl, he said.

Set aside for a moment the morality of cheering for the killing of a human being -- which despite the pilot's prompting nobody on the plane did. In purely Realpolitik terms, killing foreign leaders whom we've previously supported has been an ongoing disaster.

Our killing of Saddam Hussein has been followed by years of war and hundreds of thousands of pointless deaths. Our attempts to kill Muammar Gaddafi have killed his children and grandchildren and will end no war if they eventually succeed. Our attempts to kill Osama bin Laden, including wars justified by that mission, have involved nearly a decade of senseless slaughter in Afghanistan and the rest of the ongoing global "generational" war that is consuming our nation.

The Taliban was willing to turn bin Laden over for trial both before and after September 11, 2001. Instead our government opted for years of bloody warfare. And in the end, it was police action (investigation, a raid, and a summary execution) and not the warfare, that reportedly tracked bin Laden down in Pakistan. After capturing him, our government's representatives did not hold him for trial. They killed him and carried away his dead body.

Killing will lead only to more killing. There will be no review of bin Laden's alleged crimes, as a trial would have provided. There will be no review of earlier U.S. support for bin Laden. There will be no review of U.S. failures to prevent the September 11th attacks. Instead, there will be bitterness, hatred, and more violence, with the message being communicated to all sides that might makes right and murder is the way in which someone is, in President Obama's words, brought to justice.

Nothing is actually resolved, nothing concluded, and nothing to be celebrated in taking away life. If we want something to celebrate here, we should celebrate the end of one of the pieces of war propaganda that has driven the past decade of brutality and death. But I'm not going to celebrate that until appropriate actions follow. Nothing makes for peace like ceasing to wage war. Now would be an ideal time to give that a try.

Our senseless wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Libya must be ended. Keeping bin Laden alive and threatening, assisted in keeping the war machine churning its bloody way through cities and flesh for years. No wonder President Bush was, as he said, not interested in tracking bin Laden down.

Ending the wars was our moral duty last week exactly as this week. But if the symbolism to be found in the removal of a key propaganda piece can be combined with the recent overwhelming U.S. support for ending the wars, to actually end the wars, then I'll be ready -- with clean hands and with no nasty gleam of revenge in my eye -- to pop open the champagne.

But let's return to the morality of cheering for the killing of a human being. A decade ago that would not have seemed as natural to a U.S. airline pilot. The automatic assumption would not have been that there could be no dissenters to that celebration. A decade ago torture was considered irredeemably evil. A decade ago we believed people should have fair trials

before they are declared guilty or killed. A decade ago, if a president had announced his new power to assassinate Americans, at least a few people would have asked where in the world he got the power to assassinate non-Americans.

Is it too late to go back 10 years in time in some particular ways? As we put bin Laden behind us, can we put the degradation of our civil liberties and our representative government, and our honesty, accountability, and the rule of law behind us too? Can we recover the basic moral decency that we used to at the very least pretend and aspire to?

Not while we're dancing in the street to celebrate death.

Imagine the propaganda that the U.S. media could make of video footage of a foreign country where the primitive brutes are dancing in the streets to celebrate the murder of a tribal enemy. That is the propaganda we've just handed those who will view bin Laden as a martyr. When their revenge comes, we will know exactly what we are supposed to do: exact more revenge in turn to keep the cycle going.

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind, but the blind people think that they still see. The world looks to them like a Hollywood adventure movie. In those stories, killing someone generally causes a happy ending. That misconception is responsible for piles and piles of corpses to which more will now be added.

David Swanson is the author of "[War Is A Lie](#)" and "[Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union](#)." He blogs at [Let's Try Democracy](#) and [War Is A Crime](#)

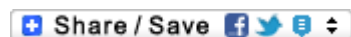
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Randall Amster: Obama Bags Osama -- So Now What?

Obama Bags Osama -- So Now What?

by Randall Amster [article link](#)

May 2, 2011 | CommonDreams

President Obama's shocking May Day announcement that Osama bin Laden has been killed and his body captured promises to usher in a new era of U.S. foreign and domestic policies alike. But what will this portend in actual practice? The implications for the future are potentially staggering in their full import, and they turn initially on how this seminal event will undoubtedly be used to justify U.S. policies that have defined the recent past.

In his announcement, President Obama demonstrated how different he is in temperament (if not policy making) from his predecessor, George W. Bush. Coming eight years to the day after the infamous "Mission Accomplished" speech -- and, coincidentally, falling on the 66th anniversary of the announcement of Hitler's death -- Obama's rendering contained none of the misplaced bravado ("Bring It On") or glorification of misery ("We Got Him!") that defined the previous administration. Instead, the President spoke in measured terms about justice, courage, and American resolve in the face of grave challenges.

Still, despite his deliberate tone, Obama's words are especially notable for their explicit vindication of the military operations of the past decade. Overtly citing the war in Afghanistan and the practices of the global intelligence apparatus as primary drivers of this potential closure event, the President has put his stamp of approval on the circuitous post-9/11 course of action that brought us here. Taking this further, the post-speech media spin implicitly extends his logic to validate tactics such as drone strikes and undeclared military incursions that have placed the U.S. in ethically murky waters while

waging the War on Terror around the world.

Wearing his flag pin, President Obama invoked the legacy of Bush-era initiatives aimed at “winning” the war, and perhaps most poignantly, drew our focus back to the events of 9/11 as the impetus for this decade-long struggle that has now at least partly been brought to fruition. Yet Obama was equally clear that this is not the end of the conflict and that “the cause of securing our country is not complete,” reminding us that we must “remain vigilant at home and abroad” since “there’s no doubt that al Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us.”

Make no mistake, this announcement signals a clear intention to vindicate the decisions of the past decade and continue on a similar course going forward. As if to affirm this historical eventuality, the media’s immediate focus on the spontaneous demonstrations of patriotic fervor that have sprung up with echoes of “USA, USA” brings us right back to those fateful September days in 2001. The tenor of these public celebratory gatherings, and the content of the President’s announcement, convey a strong sentiment that the last decade’s wars have been worth it, and likewise that the extraordinary security measures here at home have been equally successful.

On some level, the death of a single individual is essentially being heralded as a justification for the deaths of at least hundreds of thousands (a figure largely comprised of civilians) in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. It remedies all legal and moral defects attendant to the use of “enhanced interrogations” and “extraordinary renditions.” It clears the ledgers on the trillions of dollars spent to undertake these efforts for nearly ten years. It squelches dissent on Patriot Act policies and the Homeland Security apparatus. And, most appreciably, it retroactively validates the Bush Administration’s open-ended waging of global warfare.

The reality of this retrospective confirmation will have serious implications for the near future. Undoubtedly, debates about the wisdom of military operations (wherever we are deploying them) will be tamped down, and attempts to rein in military spending will likewise be muted. Security at home will be amped up for a while in an abundance of caution over potential retaliatory attacks by al Qaeda, and (assuming none are forthcoming) soon after will slip back to the “new normal” we’ve been experiencing -- with nary a complaint in the public discourse.

Significantly, President Obama will appear eminently presidential, and even his most ardent critics will deem him praiseworthy. Americans will unite in a renewed spirit, and the stalled economic recovery will receive a shot in the arm from this moment of national buoyancy. Just as the First Gulf War was said to have dispelled the military malaise of Vietnam, this episode will go a long way toward abating the war-weariness of the post-9/11 era. American exceptionalism will be reinvigorated both as a political mandate and a psychological phenomenon, as the world is reminded that the U.S. makes good on its threats and, in the end, keeps its promises.

People will celebrate this moment in many quarters, perhaps as they did to an extent on VE Day and VJ Day (yes, Americans cheered the use of atomic weapons on civilians in Japan and the carpet-bombing of Dresden as tools of “winning” World War II). In this case, we are not likely to be offered such a strong sense of closure; rather, this will be a boost to a flagging effort and a likely enabler of its aggressive continuance. Where will the next front be in this generational war? Who will be the next bogeyman, the “face of evil” that galvanizes American fears and determination alike? With all that is at stake -- politically, economically, ideologically -- the one thing we can be reasonably assured of is that the present paradigm will continue in full force.

I would very much like to report the opposite. By cutting off the head of al Qaeda, and with due regard to the pro-democracy surge of the Arab Spring, the era of perpetual warfare could be supplanted by a period of unprecedented peace. America might slowly draw down its military operations, and redirect vast resources to education and opportunity for oppressed peoples in the Middle East and here at home alike. President Obama may finally earn his Nobel Peace Prize, and concomitantly help move the country from the near-ruination of a war economy to the stable prosperity of a long-awaited peace dividend. Renewed American pride could obviate the need for ever-expanding security schemes and incursions into liberty, as people are again seen as “good.”

It could still happen this way, but it will take more than the death of one individual -- no matter his iconic stature as evil incarnate -- to somehow countermand the events and roll back the ethos of recent years. However it breaks in the days

ahead, one thing is paradoxically certain: we will continue to find ourselves living in decidedly uncertain times.

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Bin Laden's Death: Triumph or Tumult Ahead?

by Adele M. Stan [article link](#)

May 1, 2011 | AlterNet

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Friday, April 29, 2011

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Finian Cunningham: Britain's Royal Wedding: A Big Day For The Global Oligarchy

Britain's Royal Wedding: A Big Day For The Global Oligarchy

A Celebration of the Dictatorship of Global Capital over Democracy

by Finian Cunningham [article link](#)

April 28, 2011 | Global Research

The British royal wedding can be seen as a modern-day repeat of the “bread and circuses” policy of ancient Rome. In the waning days of that empire, the rulers sought to distract the masses from their grinding misery and the unwieldy wealth and corruption of the elite by sporadically throwing scraps of bread to the hungry public while saturating them with spectacles of gore and bloodlust at the Colosseum.

Today, the British public – grinding under massive austerity budget cuts, unemployment, poverty wages, social deprivations and crumbling services – are thrown scraps of feelgood comfort from the much-hyped wedding between Prince William and his girlfriend Kate Middleton. William is the grandson of Queen Elizabeth II and son of the heir apparent to the British throne, Prince Charles. Fawning media coverage will present it as a day of romance, nationhood, nostalgia and pride.

Meanwhile, the spectacles of gore and bloodlust – admittedly despite much public opposition – are located thousands of kilometers away in the Middle East, Iraq, Central Asia, Afghanistan, where over a million civilians have been killed in British-backed “wars against terror” that have yet to be sated even after eight and 10 years of butchery, respectively; and now the latest spectacle opens in North Africa, Libya, where over the past six weeks Royal Air Force warplanes have been bombing and killing civilians in the name of “peace” and “humanitarian concern”. The day before the wedding, the British

government announced that troops are to be dispatched to the borders of Libya to provide “humanitarian corridors” for displaced civilians – many of whom will have been displaced by RAF ground attack aircraft.

Of course, the British Empire has long ago waned as a singular entity and its elite is not alone in lording over their masses. The same bread and circuses charade is being played out in varied ways by the other Western powers, the US, France, Germany, Italy, that comprise today’s global Empire of Capital.

But what should be appreciated from the display in Britain is the revelation – albeit unintended – of raw state power. Behind the translucent wedding veil, what can be seen is raw state power that blows away any vestige of illusions of parliamentary democracy, illusions that are not just peculiar to Britain, but to all the Western powers. In short, the empire of corporate and financial aristocracy that has emerged in late capitalism is now asserting itself increasingly and more blatantly as a dictatorship of Capital.

All political parties, whether Conservative, Liberal or Labour in Britain, or Republican, Democrat in the US etc., are seen to be willing servants of this dictatorship.

Bear in mind that London’s royal pageant is being imposed, without any public question, at an estimated cost of some \$70 million, most of that for state security against any sign of popular protest. When the wider cost to the economy of the British government’s declared “public holiday” is factored in, the total cost may be \$10 billion – this as the British exchequer is embarking on implementing austerity budget cuts of \$130 billion. The bill for the royal wedding will be footed by the British public through future deeper cuts in jobs, education and health services, and social welfare programmes. This as the British government unilaterally adds to the public debt the cost of RAF bombing sorties in Libya, estimated at over \$1 billion a month, and its other even more costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So where is the democracy in that? Austerity budgets imposed against public will, a deficit substantially increased from a royal pageant imposed without democratic consultation, and war expenses loaded on to the suffering public – even though these wars are opposed by the majority of voters.

That is dictatorship by elite government for an unelected elite. The same dictatorship manifests in the US and other Western powers. Ordinary Americans in particular may look at the British royal wedding pageant with mild fascination as some kind of “old Europe curiosity”. But in spite of its supposed revolution against European monarchs, the US has today reinvented its own corporate and financial aristocracy that rules and plunders without democratic accountability in alliance with the oligarchies of Europe.

The real world nexus for our global oligarchy is seen graphically in the power of oil companies and the transnational banking system. Britain’s Queen Elizabeth, one of the world’s top 10 richest individuals, has a personal fortune that is reckoned to far exceed her country’s \$130 billion deficit cuts. She is a major shareholder in Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum – these companies along with Exxon and Chevron make up the “four horsemen” of global Big Oil.

As Dean Henderson, author of *Big Oil and Their Bankers in the Persian Gulf*, points out:

“The Four Horsemen have interlocking directorates with the international mega-banks. Exxon Mobil shares board members with JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, Royal Bank of Canada and Prudential. Chevron Texaco has interlocks with Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase. BP Amoco shares directors with JP Morgan Chase. RD/Shell has ties with Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, N. M. Rothschild & Sons and Bank of England.”

Henderson continues: “Information on RD/Shell is harder to obtain since they are registered in the UK and Holland and are not required to file 10K reports. It is 60% owned by Royal Dutch Petroleum of Holland and 40% owned by Shell Trading & Transport of the UK. The company has only 14,000 stockholders and few directors. The consensus from researchers is that Royal Dutch/Shell is still controlled by the Rothschild, Oppenheimer, Nobel and Samuel families along with the British House of Windsor and the Dutch House of Orange.” [1]

Such global connections bestow on the British monarch the epithet of “the world’s ultimate insider trader”.

Scott Thompson writes: “[T]he Queen is the world's ultimate ‘insider trader’. She not only gets tips from British financiers, but also has access to all the state secrets, through the [Privy Council] ‘boxes’. Thus, if the Queen learns from among all public and private British Empire intelligence and economic warfare entities reporting to her, for example, that Nigeria is about to be destabilized, she can immediately call her broker. Under the secrecy laws of the British Empire, it would be unthinkable for anyone to consider pressing charges of insider trading and conflict of interest against the sovereign: In fact, only a handful of trusted advisers would ever know.” [2]

To put these connections of the House of Windsor to the global Empire of Capital in a real world context, we should factor in the following:

1. The war in Iraq, according to recent revelations from Wikileaks, and others, was most certainly about gaining access for Big Oil and British Big Oil in particular, despite the arrogant assertions by former British prime minister Tony Blair that such claims made at the time of the US/British invasion of Iraq in 2003 were “absurd”. [3]
2. The present NATO war in Libya has an uncanny resemblance to British and French war planning for that country several months before any sign of alleged popular uprising. [4]
3. NATO’s military intervention in Libya was precipitated by Muammar Gaddafi’s move to put a financial squeeze on Big Oil to compensate for more than \$2 billion in reparations extracted from that country over a frame-up for the Lockerbie bombing in 1988, according to former US intelligence asset Susan Lindauer.
4. The subjugation and integration of Libya’s independent financial system within the global banking system, the same system in which the British monarch is a major shareholder. [5]
5. Libya’s vast untapped oil wealth – the largest in Africa – was impeded by a leader considered unreliable to the long-term interests of Big Oil.
6. The reconquest of Libya by Western militarism provides a strategic bridgehead for global Capital to thwart pro-democracy uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa – uprising that represent threats to the profit interests of Big Oil and its shareholders, including the House of Windsor.

On the last point, it should be noted that Western governments have been aided and abetted by dictatorial monarchs from the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. The Persian Gulf monarchs are among the guest list attending the Big Day for the British royals. The delegation from the House of Saud is particularly noteworthy, given in its ongoing involvement in the vicious repression of the pro-democracy movement in Britain’s former colony of Bahrain.

But the royal wedding is not just a peculiar Big Day for the seemingly quaint House of Windsor. It is in many ways a celebration of the dictatorship of global Capital over democracy in Britain and elsewhere around the world, including the ‘Republic of the USA’. As the assorted global dictators assembled in London’s Westminster Abbey might say in harmony with the happy couple: “Till death do us part”.

NOTES:

[1] [The Four Horsemen Behind America's Oil Wars](#)
by Dean Henderson, April 26, 2011

[2] The Crown Jewels: The Queen Is The Ultimate Insider Trader
by Scott Thompson, The American Almanac, August 25, 1997

[3] [New Exposé of Big Oil’s Role in the Iraq War](#)
by James Ridgeway, April 25, 2011

[4] [When War Games Go Live: "Staging" a "Humanitarian War" against "SOUTHLAND"](#)

Under an Imaginary UN Security Council Resolution 3003
by Prof. Michel Chossudovsky, April 16, 2011

[5] [Libya: All About Oil, or All About Banking?](#)
by Ellen Brown, April 14, 2011

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Thursday, April 28, 2011

[A More Militarized CIA for a More Militarized America](#)



A More Militarized CIA for a More Militarized America
by Glenn Greenwald [article link](#)
April 28, 2011 | Salon
Salon [home page](#)

... The nomination of Petraeus doesn't change much; it merely reflects how Washington is run. That George Bush's favorite war-commanding General -- who advocated for and oversaw the Surge in Iraq -- is also Barack Obama's favorite war-commanding General, and that Obama is now appointing him to run a nominally civilian agency that has been converted into an "increasingly militarized" arm of the American war-fighting state, says all one needs to know about the fully bipartisan militarization of American policy. There's little functional difference between running America's multiple wars as a General and running them as CIA Director because American institutions in the National Security State are all devoted to the same overarching cause: Endless War. ...

New Men, New Missions at Pentagon and CIA
by Alan Silverleib [article link](#)
April 28, 2011 | CNN
CNN [home page](#)

Like the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars? You'll LOVE This!

by Tom Andrews [article link](#)

April 28, 2011 | CommonDreams

CommonDreams [home page](#)

If you like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan then you'll love what Senator John McCain and Congressman "Buck" McKeon, the new Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, are proposing: Congress should give the President and the Secretary of Defense a blank check to wage war against anyone he or she declares "associated" with al-Qaeda or the Taliban – anytime, anywhere, anyhow. ...

... It is arguably the greatest ceding of unchecked authority to the Executive Branch in modern history. Not only would this bill abdicate Congress' authority to declare war, it would relieve the Administration of the need to seek Congressional resolutions of support or authorizations for new military actions. ...

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Vi Ransel: Manufacturing Poor People

Manufacturing Poor People

by Vi Ransel [article link](#)

April 27, 2011 | Global Research

Even as the overall population of the world continues to increase, the increase in the number of poor people outstrips that growth. How is this possible? Are the poor simply breeding like rabbits, increasing their numbers geometrically in a suicidal, lemming-like production line of poverty-stricken people? Or are they getting some outside aid in their catastrophic endeavor?

In just the past 50 years, the Rich People of the "First", or Western World have invested heavily, through their banks, industries and other corporations, in the poorest regions of the "Third" World in Africa, Asia and Latin America, home to the majority of the world's poor. Transnational corporations are attracted by the richness of these people's natural resources, the richness of profits off cheap labor, the near total lack of environmental and worker safety regulations and the non-existent benefits for said labor.

U.S. transnationals were given a push toward this pregnant profit source, this attractive and waiting richness, by the U.S. government, which subsidizes (read gives taxpayers' money to) corporations in the form of tax breaks on foreign investment and even helping them to pay their relocation expenses at the expense of not only the taxpayers, but those taxpayers whose jobs are outsourced by this support for global U.S. economic dominance.

Local businesses in the "Third" World are destroyed as U.S. transnationals penetrate and overwhelm their markets like species imported to get rid of pests which turn out to be even bigger pests themselves. Taxpayer-subsidized cartels of transnationals dump their cheap, surplus goods in these countries at below their own cost to undersell local producers, thus forcing them out of business and allowing the U.S. corporations to take over the market. (This is also Wal-Mart's favorite technique for killing the competition in local markets right here in America.)

In the case of Big Agriculture they also take over/expropriate the best pieces of land, monocrop them with products for export, and douse them with oil-based, chemical fertilizers and toxic pesticides, destroying the soil. Think Dust Bowl. This leaves less land for use for those run-out-of-business farmers and their families to produce the food to feed the local population, who, along with the displaced farmers, are forced to go to work - for next to nothing - on those monocropped plantations to grow food that will be shipped out of the country or to work in American sub-contracted sweat shop factories. This also forces them to buy what food they can afford from these same Big Ag corporations. This is exactly the same scenario as in the U.S., since the bulk of the U.S. population consists of dependent consumers, unable to feed themselves, who must go to a supermarket to feed off the tit of Big Ag.

Robbing local people of self-sufficiency creates a perfect profit-making mechanism based on a labor market flooded with desperate people who can be herded into a neat, ready-to-use package, labor in a box, in slums and shanty towns which they will leave to slave for token, poverty wages - if they can find work - which are most often in violation of their own countries' minimum wage laws. This is thanks to the overarching authority of Western-created "Free" Trade Agreements enforced by the World Trade Organization in its private, unaccountable courts.

Since the U.S. is one of the few pariah nations which refuses to sign the international convention for the abolishment of child labor and forced labor, Wal-Mart, Disney and J.C. Penny were able to pay eleven cents - **11 cents** - an hour in Haiti in 2007. This allows these transnational corporations, not only in the "Third" World, but here in America, to have workers as young as **12 - twelve** - sustain high rates of fatalities and injuries while working for less than the minimum wage. Talk about your right to work!

The savings these transnationals - and their shareholders - are able to rack up by exploiting and further impoverishing the people of the "Third" World do not translate into lower prices for the consumers, e.g. people, of the "First", or Western World. Oh no, my pretty! Transnationals don't outsource to save their customers money. They do it to increase their profits and their payouts to shareholders. For instance, children in Indonesia in 1990 made shoes for thirteen cents an hour working a 12-hour day. The shoes cost \$2.60 to make. They sold in the United States for \$100.

In addition to this slick trick, any U.S. "aid" to these transnationals-impoverished countries comes with stainless steel strings attached. Besides the "aid" money being used to create an infrastructure - ports, railroads, airports, highways, refineries, utilities, etc. - which facilitates the transnationals' ability to make money at the expense of local economies, this "aid" must most often be spent on U.S. goods, thus enriching even more U.S. corporations.

The country receiving "aid" must also give investment preference to even more U.S. corporations. This causes a shift away from products produced locally and toward those imported from the West, creating more debt, dependency and hunger. Further, a lot of this "aid" slips silently into the silken pockets of the local ruling class to buy their complicity and even enlist them in the enforcement of the ongoing heist.

Hand-in-hand with U.S. "aid" comes more "help" from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The financial contributions to those organizations by countries belonging to them determines the weight of their voting power. Since the U.S. is the largest "donor", you can just guess the name of that tune. And, of course, the IMF (International Mother Fuckers) works under a cloak of secrecy (to protect the confidentiality of the donors, dontcha know) enforced by the banks

and the treasury organizations of the rich nations who run it.

The World Bank loans money to a poor country to "help" in its development, to build up a part of its economy. "If", and almost certainly when (that's The Plan) the poor country is unable to pay the usurious interest on the loan because of declining exports (again, The Plan), the country has to borrow more money in order to service the debt.

The IMF extends more loans, with more of those stainless steel strings more tightly bound around the victim, er, I mean, loan recipient, trussing up the "benefiting" poor nation like a Thanksgiving turkey about to be devoured by the West, The Rich. The country which borrows money from these Fuckers must give tax breaks to Western transnationals. The country must slash wages and refuse to protect local businesses from being ravaged by cheap imports and corporate takeovers.

The country is further strong-armed to sell, at fire sale prices, all its government-owned mines, its railroads, industries and utilities to privately-owned, mostly-foreign corporations. The country must allow its forests to be clearcut and its land to be strip-mined. Money for education, healthcare, food assistance and the transportation infrastructure must be sheared back to service the debt. And the interest on the debt, through the wondrously magical Western miracle of compound interest, keeps growing and growing and growing and growing and on and on and on and on... And all the while, the people of the country are less able to feed themselves, since they are forced to grow cash crops for export to feed that debt service. This is how the "Third" World is kept in poverty, subjugated to the "First" World, whose people purposefully, premeditatedly impoverish and immiserate the people of the "Third" World via depraved indifference in order to serve the plump, plutocratic pleasure of U.S. transnationals, their shareholders and American consumers. This debt reaches a point where nearly ALL of a country's export earnings go to debt payment, squeezing the economy like a lemon, and the poverty-making snowballs.

And while critics of these "aid" programs, most often faux-progressives, point out that these programs just don't work for "those people", the people of the "Third" World's nations, these same programs continue to receive funding from their adherents precisely because they **do** work, exactly as they were **intended** to work, to transfer the rich resources of the poor in the "Third" World to the already wealthy people in the "First" World. What an arrogant and ludicrous appellation is "First" World, self-designated by fatted, rich Western peoples to describe and denigrate the poor people of whom the scaffold supporting the American, and Western, standard of living is built.

This is how the magical, voodoo, trickle down economics of the Friedmans, the Reagans, the Volckers, the Greenspans, the Bushes, the Rockefellers, the Rothschilds, etc. who proselytize "free" market theology works. The people of the "Third" World are used as fertilizer to grow the fortunes of the people of the "First", or Western World. They are used like toilet paper, like disposable plastic packaging, like prophylactics (scum bags) and then discarded as if their lives meant nothing more. They are receptacles, vessels in which the rich "create" their "self-made" wealth - do their business - then casually flush these poor people - and their children - out of sight, down the polluted toilet the "First" World has made of our whole world.

Transnational corporations use the U.S. government and corporate lobbyist-written "free" trade policies, which are designed and work very well, to prevent "Third" World nations from ever "developing" sufficiently to become serious trade competitors. And this is because U.S. corporations learned the lesson of the Marshall Plan very well.

After World War II, America's major trade competitors were flattened, economically as well as physically, and America, in all its beneficence and magnanimity, offered money to Europe and Japan so they could rebuild shattered industries and infrastructure by using this "aid" money to purchase American goods and services, profiting hugely in the process. And while Europe and Japan were rebuilding, the U.S. was busy establishing itself as the world's global economic and military behemoth. Following World War II, and up to the mid-Seventies, the United States experienced the most prosperous period, overall, in its history. And then things began to go south, as former flattened economic competitors began to recover enough to give the behemoth a run for its money, and actually overtaking the once supremely, economically dominant USA.

Well, U.S. transnationals didn't intend to ever let that happen again. There would be no more giving a real leg up to potential competitors. And thus we arrived at where we are today. And, in fact, the ruse works so well, that since the

Seventies the plutocracy has been using the very same template here at home, - with an increasingly heavy hand. See U.S. auto workers, healthcare, the bank bailout, foreclosed homes, 600,000 jobs a month jettisoned, the murder of state governments, et al. Who, or what, will be next?

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Wednesday, April 27, 2011

Joe Burns: It's Time to Revive an Old Rallying Cry: Labor Is Not A Commodity!

For America's labor movement to survive, it must recommit to—and defend—the principles that once defined it

It's Time to Revive an Old Rallying Cry: Labor Is Not A Commodity!

by Joe Burns [article link](#) [article link](#)

April 27, 2011 | CommonDreams | In These Times

During [last year's strike against Mott's](#), the apple juice maker, Tim Budd, an employee on the bargaining team, heard a plant manager say across the bargaining table that employees were “a commodity like soybeans and oil, and the price of commodities goes up and down.” Mott's management quickly disavowed their errant manager's statement. After all, comparing workers to soybeans is not smooth, even for a unionbusting employer.

The verbal slip-up did, however, reveal a fundamental belief of management which has much to do with the future of the labor movement. To management, human labor is a simply commodity—nothing more, nothing less. A commodity is an object traded in the marketplace without differentiation, such as lumber, oil, or soybeans. In this context, commodities are inputs into the production process. They are things.

To the traditional labor movement— from the 1880s up through the 1960s—the notion that human beings were mere objects to be used up during the production process was highly offensive. As Samuel Gompers, the conservative head of the American Federation of Labor in the first part of the 20th century, melodramatically stated, “You cannot weigh the human soul in the same scales with a piece of pork.”

In fact, labor activists spent decades lobbying Congress, eventually winning inclusion into the 1914 Clayton Act the simple

declaration that “The labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce.” While that legislation did not serve its intended purpose of stopping courts from issuing anti-strike injunctions, the ideas underlying labor’s push proved vital in reviving the labor movement during the Great Depression.

During the 1930s, a powerful form of unionism rejected the idea that workers were mere objects holding no rights to the workplaces their very labor created. According to historian Sidney Fine, during the sit-down strike at Flint, Mich., in 1937, the United Auto Workers “contended that the strike was legal since the worker enjoyed a property right in his job.” As one sit-down striker explained, “Our hides are wrapped around those machines.”

Workers took over their workplaces, blocked scabs at their plant gates, and prevented management from removing equipment from their plants. “The property right of the worker in his job,” explains Fine, “was superior to the right of the company to use its property as it saw fit since the workers had invested their lives in the plant whereas the stockholders of the company had invested only their dollars.”

For the last several decades, formerly mainstream trade union principles—such as the ideas that labor is not a commodity, and that labor creates all wealth—have been marginalized within the labor movement. With rare exceptions, such as the United Electrical workers union’s [takeover of the Republic Windows plant](#) in Chicago, the labor movement has failed to challenge the illegitimate, management-inspired viewpoint embedded in the legal system.

Trade unionists have come to accept a system where workers can spend their entire lives toiling in a plant, and in return, investors can ship their jobs across the world.

Unions cannot win operating under management’s framework. In Wisconsin alone, [Mercury Marine](#), [Harley Davidson](#), and the [Kohler Corp.](#) all extracted concessions from unions by threatening to move plants. As Working in These Times contributor Roger Bybee [points out](#), “Without the national labor movement contesting every threat of plant relocation as an act of greed and disloyalty, workers sense no broader movement against de-industrialization and are unable to see any way out through a protracted battle.”

And it is not just in the private sector that this corporate ideology prevails. The ongoing attack on public-sector unionism is not only an attack on unions and unionism; it is an attack on the very idea of a public sphere not controlled by the market.

Anti-labor conservatives envision a world where capital reigns supreme; where the market rules every sphere of human activity. So hand in hand with attempts to gut public sector union rights, come attempts to destroy public education and public service. To anti-labor conservatives, everything should be a commodity, human labor, education, and even the water we drink.

As [the struggle in Madison](#) shows, the revival of the labor movement is about big ideas and bold action. Through heroic struggle, workers in Wisconsin transformed the terms of debate. Rather than debating public sector pay and benefits, the focus became the very right of workers to collectively bargain and issues of corporate control of the economy. The signature chant of the protesters, “This is What Democracy Looks Like,” pitted people power against a political system fueled by corporate dollars.

As long as we allow management’s ideas to prevail on the big questions—how wealth is accumulated, the role of labor in production and the rights of capital versus labor—unionism will continue to be on the verge of extinction. Successful trade unionism must, by its very nature, challenge corporate control over the economy.

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Joe Burns, a former local union president active in strike solidarity, is a labor negotiator and attorney. He is the author of the forthcoming book [Reviving the Strike: How Working People Can Regain Power and Transform America](#) (IG Publishing, 2011) and can be reached at joe.burns2@gmail.com.

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Reviving the Strike [blog home](#)
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MM Book 1 Chapter 1-9

Being [convinced], Doing [conviction]: GOD BEING *IS* GOD-ING [Doing], *not* wanting and taking from each other, but contributing, gifting each other [the "return" on a love investment is love]; nothing [no thing] nor anybody or group is above the sanctity of a single human being !! — we must be gifted in order to gift: love us, so that we may love ... teach us ... keep us ... WE HAVE TO BE HEALED TO HEAL, TAUGHT TO TEACH, LOVED TO LOVE, vs. the violation of God: the commodification of life [of God], the ersatz control mechanism, “the” crime against humanity; this is the “mark of the Beast” systemic, the identifying sign, the “self-definition”, the eco-nomic social engagement !! – **the “systemic” is self-defining: human beings are NOT commodities to be consumed [wasted, thrown away; used and abused]: A HUMAN BEING IS NOT A PRODUCT [to be bought, but a gift to be given: the return is love !!], NOT A RESOURCE FOR BUSINESS [human resources];** those who have “value” above their fellows must GIVE their value to those “undervalued” [a redefinition, an active and transitional re-defining into the God Family community (based on love)]; the “end-game” means of business [pillage, rape and abandonment (colonialism; the individual)] has nothing to do with God or community !! – the Holy Waters of God will be the “final liquidation” of business !!

MM Book 1 Chapter 1 [web page](#) (widescreen)

MM Book 1 Chapter 1 [web page](#) (blog)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [6:30 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

Fornicating Unlawfully Cunningly Knowingly



fornication [Lexicon #4202] porneia - fornication 1a) illicit sexual intercourse [metaph. BUSINESS = PROFIT, OUR NATURE OF INTERACTION]; (from 1 Cor. 6:12, we learn how leniently converts among the heathen regarded this vice and how lightly they indulged in it) 1b) metaph. **the worship of idols**; of the defilement of idolatry, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols (meat offered to idols, ie., speeches/sermons in support of the private-State/COG Inc., sanction-blessing of God claimed (CONFORMING CHRIST TO THE WORLD (KOSMOS), etc., BLIND NATIONALISM, PATRIOTISM))

The Spirit (Way) Of Life 1
by mammonmessiah [article link](#)
January 25, 2010 | MMr

The Spirit (Way) Of Life 2
by mammonmessiah [article link](#)
January 25, 2010 | MMr

Isaiah 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called *trees of righteousness*, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. 4. **And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. ...** 11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are *sown in it* to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause *righteousness and praise* to spring forth *before all the nations*.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [6:58 AM](#) [0 comments](#) [📧](#)

Monday, April 25, 2011

Chris Hedges: The Corporate State Wins Again

The Corporate State Wins Again
by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

When did our democracy die? When did it irrevocably transform itself into a lifeless farce and absurd political theater? When did the press, labor, universities and the Democratic Party—which once made piecemeal and incremental reform possible—wither and atrophy? When did reform through electoral politics become a form of magical thinking? When did the dead hand of the corporate state become unassailable?

The body politic was mortally wounded during the long, slow strangulation of ideas and priorities during the Red Scare and the Cold War. Its bastard child, the war on terror, inherited the iconography and language of permanent war and fear. The battle against internal and external enemies became the excuse to funnel trillions in taxpayer funds and government resources to the war industry, curtail civil liberties and abandon social welfare. Skeptics, critics and dissenters were ridiculed and ignored. The FBI, Homeland Security and the CIA enforced ideological conformity. Debate over the expansion of empire became taboo. Secrecy, the anointing of specialized elites to run our affairs and the steady intrusion of the state into the private lives of citizens conditioned us to totalitarian practices. [Sheldon Wolin](#) points out in “[Democracy Incorporated](#)” that this configuration of corporate power, which he calls “inverted totalitarianism,” is not like “Mein Kampf” or “The Communist Manifesto,” the result of a premeditated plot. It grew, Wolin writes, from “a set of effects produced by actions or practices undertaken in ignorance of their lasting consequences.”

Corporate capitalism—because it was trumpeted throughout the Cold War as a bulwark against communism—expanded with fewer and fewer government regulations and legal impediments. Capitalism was seen as an unalloyed good. It was not required to be socially responsible. Any impediment to its growth, whether in the form of trust-busting, union activity or regulation, was condemned as a step toward socialism and capitulation. Every corporation is a despotic fiefdom, a mini-dictatorship. And by the end Wal-Mart, Exxon Mobil and Goldman Sachs had grafted their totalitarian structures onto the state.

The Cold War also bequeathed to us the species of the neoliberal. The neoliberal enthusiastically embraces “national security” as the highest good. The neoliberal—composed of the gullible and cynical careerists—parrots back the mantra of endless war and corporate capitalism as an inevitable form of human progress. Globalization, the neoliberal assures us, is the route to a worldwide utopia. Empire and war are vehicles for lofty human values. [Greg Mortenson](#), the disgraced author of “Three Cups of Tea,” tapped into this formula. The deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocents in Iraq or Afghanistan are ignored or dismissed as the cost of progress. We are bringing democracy to Iraq, liberating and educating the women of

Afghanistan, defying the evil clerics in Iran, ridding the world of terrorists and protecting Israel. Those who oppose us do not have legitimate grievances. They need to be educated. It is a fantasy. But to name our own evil is to be banished.

We continue to talk about personalities—Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama—although the heads of state or elected officials in Congress have become largely irrelevant. Lobbyists write the bills. Lobbyists get them passed. Lobbyists make sure you get the money to be elected. And lobbyists employ you when you get out of office. Those who hold actual power are the tiny elite who manage the corporations. Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson, in their book “[Winner-Take-All Politics](#),” point out that the share of national income of the top 0.1 percent of Americans since 1974 has grown from 2.7 to 12.3 percent. One in six American workers may be without a job. Some 40 million Americans may live in poverty, with tens of millions more living in a category called “near poverty.” Six million people may be forced from their homes because of foreclosures and bank repossessions. But while the masses suffer, Goldman Sachs, one of the financial firms most responsible for the evaporation of \$17 trillion in wages, savings and wealth of small investors and shareholders, is giddily handing out \$17.5 billion in compensation to its managers, including \$12.6 million to its CEO, Lloyd Blankfein.

The massive redistribution of wealth, as Hacker and Pierson write, happened because lawmakers and public officials were, in essence, hired to permit it to happen. It was not a conspiracy. The process was transparent. It did not require the formation of a new political party or movement. It was the result of inertia by our political and intellectual class, which in the face of expanding corporate power found it personally profitable to facilitate it or look the other way. The armies of lobbyists, who write the legislation, bankroll political campaigns and disseminate propaganda, have been able to short-circuit the electorate. Hacker and Pierson pinpoint the administration of Jimmy Carter as the start of our descent, but I think

it began long before with Woodrow Wilson, the ideology of permanent war and the capacity by public relations to manufacture consent. Empires die over such long stretches of time that the exact moment when terminal decline becomes irreversible is probably impossible to document. That we are at the end, however, is beyond dispute.

The rhetoric of the Democratic Party and the neoliberals sustains the illusion of participatory democracy. The Democrats and their liberal apologists offer minor palliatives and a feel-your-pain language to mask the cruelty and goals of the corporate state. The reconfiguration of American society into a form of neofeudalism will be cemented into place whether it is delivered by Democrats, who are pushing us there at 60 miles an hour, or Republicans, who are barreling toward it at 100 miles an hour. Wolin writes, “By fostering an illusion among the powerless classes” that it can make their interests a priority, the Democratic Party “pacifies and thereby defines the style of an opposition party in an inverted totalitarian system.” The Democrats are always able to offer up a least-worst alternative while, in fact, doing little or nothing to thwart the march toward corporate collectivism.

The systems of information, owned or dominated by corporations, keep the public entranced with celebrity meltdowns, gossip, trivia and entertainment. There are no national news or intellectual forums for genuine political discussion and debate. The talking heads on Fox or MSNBC or CNN spin and riff on the same inane statements by Sarah Palin or Donald Trump. They give us lavish updates on the foibles of a Mel Gibson or Charlie Sheen. And they provide venues for the powerful to speak directly to the masses. It is burlesque.

It is not that the public does not want a good health care system, programs that provide employment, quality public education or an end to Wall Street’s looting of the U.S. Treasury. Most polls suggest Americans do. But it has become impossible for most citizens to find out what is happening in the centers of power. Television news celebrities dutifully present two opposing sides to every issue, although each side is usually lying. The viewer can believe whatever he or she wants to believe. Nothing is actually elucidated or explained. The sound bites by Republicans or Democrats are accepted at face value. And once the television lights are turned off, the politicians go back to the business of serving business.

We live in a fragmented society. We are ignorant of what is being done to us. We are diverted by the absurd and political theater. We are afraid of terrorism, of losing our job and of carrying out acts of dissent. We are politically demobilized and paralyzed. We do not question the state religion of patriotic virtue, the war on terror or the military and security state. We are herded like sheep through airports by Homeland Security and, once we get through the metal detectors and body scanners, spontaneously applaud our men and women in uniform. As we become more insecure and afraid, we become

more anxious. We are driven by fiercer and fiercer competition. We yearn for stability and protection. This is the genius of all systems of totalitarianism. The citizen’s highest hope finally becomes to be secure and left alone.

Human history, rather than a chronicle of freedom and democracy, is characterized by ruthless domination. Our elites have done what all elites do. They have found sophisticated mechanisms to thwart popular aspirations, disenfranchise the working and increasingly the middle class, keep us passive and make us serve their interests. The brief democratic opening in our society in the early 20th century, made possible by radical movements, unions and a vigorous press, has again been shut tight. We were mesmerized by political charades, cheap consumerism and virtual hallucinations as we were ruthlessly stripped of power.

The game is over. We lost. The corporate state will continue its inexorable advance until two-thirds of the nation is locked into a desperate, permanent underclass. Most Americans will struggle to make a living while the Blankfeins and our political elites wallow in the decadence and greed of the Forbidden City and Versailles. These elites do not have a vision. They know only one word—*more*. They will continue to exploit the nation, the global economy and the ecosystem. And they will use their money to hide in gated compounds when it all implodes. Do not expect them to take care of us when it starts to unravel. We will have to take care of ourselves. We will have to create small, monastic communities where we can sustain and feed ourselves. It will be up to us to keep alive the intellectual, moral and culture values the corporate state has attempted to snuff out. It is either that or become drones and serfs in a global, corporate dystopia. It is not much of a choice. But at least we still have one.

Chris Hedges writes [a regular column for Truthdig.com](#). Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: [War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning](#), [What Every Person Should Know About War](#), and [American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America](#). His most recent book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

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Corporatist America

"We Live In A Corporate State"

"We have undergone a coup d'état in slow motion"

RTV Interview With Chris Hedges [article/video link](#)

Originally Broadcast April 15, 2011 | ICH

Information Clearing House [home page](#)

Talking Revolution:

The New Elderly Generation Can Provide the Spark for an American Rising

by Dave Lindorff [article link](#) [article link](#)

April 25, 2011 | CommonDreams | This Can't Be Happening

This Can't Be Happening [home page](#)

Washington on the Rocks:

An Empire of Autocrats, Aristocrats, and Uniformed Thugs Begins to Totter

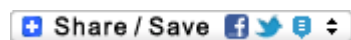
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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:27 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Sunday, April 24, 2011

The Commodification of Life



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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:43 AM](#) [0 comments](#) [✉](#)

Linda Wagner Schmoldt: A Time to Weep, A Time To...

The climb up Golgotha is hard. It's a long walk to resurrection

A Time to Weep, A Time To...

by Linda Wagner Schmoldt [article link](#)

April 24, 2011 | CommonDreams

In 1944 our mother married our father, a fresh seminary graduate and moved with him from Ohio to eastern Montana. She was twenty-two, bright, pretty, and funny. Besides her upbringing in a loving, pious, church-going family, she probably knew little about what her role as a minister's wife would entail.

At her first ladies aid society meeting she found out that they started each session by having everyone recite a Bible verse. Taken unaware, she quoted the shortest one she knew, "Jesus wept."

Perhaps the stress of the moment blocked her memory of anything else. Maybe she didn't know that many verses. After all, it had been years since her Confirmation as an eighth-grader when memorization of Bible verses was a weekly requirement. Or, perhaps her playful nature just took over.

I can imagine the reaction. The brief words didn't quite meet the mark. Maybe there were a few giggles, maybe some murmurs of disapproval, a rolling of eyes.

I try to picture our father, the young, thin, bespectacled, pastor, his hair swept back in a pompadour. New to his first church, standing before those pious ladies, most, if not all, older than him and certainly older than our mother. I imagine he was a little shocked; probably embarrassed.

Perhaps they would later have words. Our mother might have wept as well. In their loneliness out there on those Montana prairies did they make-up? Make love? Was that the night their first child, our older brother was conceived? Although our father repeated the story often (probably the shortest one he ever told), we don't have any of those details. In each retelling, nested in a long string of other stories, he would still shake his head in disbelief.

I thought of that short verse and the story this last Thursday. It was Maundy Thursday, the night where the verse refers to Jesus as he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, the night before his crucifixion.

Growing up as the daughter of a minister, I often say my theological training and my theological questioning began early. There was a lot of weeping along the way. While I am an ardent believer in the teachings of Jesus, I struggle with the institutional interpretations and distortions.

In my early twenties, during the early seventies, my move into “Liberation Theology” with its view of a radical Jesus who stood for social justice was strongly influenced by the musicals, [Jesus Christ, Superstar](#) and [Godspell](#). It was then that I first pictured Jesus, not as an old man, but as an older brother. I identified with this radical young man who stood up for the poor and the disempowered. Who stood up against the powers that be. I pictured him and his small group of friends out there every day challenging the status quo, threatening the greed of the money changers, protesting the disregard for the lepers. Countering the empire philosophy of Roman as he advocated for the peacemakers.

Although the verse, “Jesus wept,” only occurs once in the Bible, I picture Jesus weeping a lot. How frustrating his work was. Telling a violent, military occupied world to love one another, to do good to those who hate you. Telling the wealthy to sell all they have and give the money to the poor. Imagine his “press coverage.” Who was this nut? The Kingdom of Heaven was for the children?

He must have wept after the countless rallies, wondering if people really understood his message. His challenging encounters with the leaders of the Jewish society. After a day of dealing with the need for all sorts of healing. The Sermon on the Mount must have moved him to tears as well.

That night in the garden must have been a real melt-down. Even his friends, his beloved disciples didn’t seem to get it.

I wonder how much weeping Jesus would have done seeing the distortion and perversion of his words in future theological discussions. The things that are ascribed to him and the ideas that are neglected. The using of Christianity to justify so much horror and disaster in the building of empire.

Good Friday this year, was also Earth Day. Surely he would weep over the horrendous destruction of God’s creation.

Tears for the greed, the wanton consumption, the waste of resources and human potential. The violence against humanity and the cultures build on war.

Jesus would be in Washington, D.C. this week, weeping as money is stripped from the budget, taken from the poor, the sick, the elderly. From children’s education and the protection of the earth. Money channeled in the perpetuation of corporate greed and war.

But Jesus didn’t just weep. He poured his heart and soul out and then he woke his sleeping disciples and went out to face his enemies and his death.

I recently did a meditation based around a series of portraits painted by Robert Shetterly. They are collected under the theme Americans Who Tell the Truth. As I was inspired by this succession of lives, from Chief Joseph to Howard Zinn. From Sojourner Truth to Amy Goodman, I thought about the pain they all must have felt. The loneliness of being prophets of truth. The frustration of trying to get their messages across. I thought about them weeping.

When our mother uttered that short verse, “Jesus wept,” she didn’t recognize the power of those words. What if our father had said, “yes! Let us take a moment to also weep.” My God, it was 1944. The whole world needed to be wept over.

Then after the weeping, those ladies might have stood up and said, “okay! Let’s get going. Something is really wrong here. We need to steer this ship in a different direction. The war may be ending but the world needs a lot of healing.”

So, yes. We need a lot of weeping these days. Maybe we should stand before our capitals and city halls, the military

recruitment centers and corporate headquarters and just weep. So bring a big handkerchief (preferably organic, free-trade cotton – no Kleenex) some sturdy walking shoes, a sun hat, an umbrella, ear muffs. We're going to be out here a long time. Hold hands with those who tell the truth. With Jesus. He's been through this before. The climb up Golgotha is hard. It's a long walk to resurrection.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:24 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Saturday, April 23, 2011

[Rob Kall: Is the US Military America's Biggest Security Threat?](#)

Is the US Military America's Biggest Security Threat?

by Rob Kall [article link](#)

April 21, 2011 | OpEdNews

America's Military has become the biggest THREAT to US security.

The USA's military is supposed to make the US more secure. But it has become, for many reasons and in many ways, the biggest threat to American security, the American way of life and even America's future. The leaders-- both military and civilian-- have to be considered part of the threat-- part of the problem, part of the system that is endangering America.

The US Military is a huge cancer on our budget. It weakens our economy, weakens our currency, saps our ability to maintain vital infrastructure. The 700 plus military bases spread throughout the world are supposed to make us more secure. Our wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya are supposed to make us more secure. Instead, the wars have raised the levels of hate for the US to unprecedented levels.

Ron Paul says, today, on CNN, "We have fallen into a terrible trap, doing exactly what Osama Bin Laden wanted us to do."

And this is true. To make matters worse we have a president who, like his predecessor, fails to lead and takes orders from his generals. "I'll listen to what the Generals say," both Dubya and Obama have said. As Dennis Kucinich has observed, that is not leadership.

Of course, it's not a simple matter of telling the generals to stand down. John Perkins, NYTimes best selling author of *Confessions of An Economic Hit Man*, told me, in an interview about his newest book, *Hoodwinked*, "It's the career people who are calling all the shots and they are deeply influenced by the corporatocracy."

With the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling, corporations have been handed even more power, and people like the Koch brothers, who Perkins says are guilty of sedition, are calling more and more of the shots as they buy more and more politicians ways into office.

This gets even more complicated by another problem Perkins describes how now, "There are many many ways to assassinate a person today. You don't need a bullet anymore."

Perkins points out the indisputable fact that Kennedy went against the Military and was assassinated. Eisenhower is credited with his famous speech about the danger of the military industrial complex, but Perkins points out he "spoke about the military industrial complex on last day of his presidency."

Back in those days, J. Edgar Hoover was suspected to have evidence that could "assassinate" the reputations of everyone in Washington, including the White House. Now, the CIA and FBI are agencies with minimal accountability, incredible funding from un-reported drug and gun sale operations, and that leaves out the massive, secret intelligence operations of the

military which are even more unaccountable.

It's understandable that presidents are afraid to truly lead and stand up to the military threat that lurks between the lines. It may be, especially with institutionalized vote theft and with Citizens United in place, that we will be unable to use the voting system to change things. If Obama wins, the corporations win. He's already their man. If the Koch brothers and friends win, and buy a Republican presidency, same thing-- corporatocracy continues.

For some, it's about oil, or access to shipping routes, or minerals or trade opportunities... there are many corporate uses for the US military.

Traditionally, challenges to the military are greeted with accusations of being unpatriotic. We need to change the narrative, the language and the conversation. The US military is no longer serving the needs of the American people. It is serving and has long been serving the needs of the multinational corporations-- the same ones that cut jobs in the US by 2.9 million in the past decade, while increasing non-US jobs by 2.4 million, according to the [Wall Street Journal](#).

The US Military is really an arm of multinational corporations. It serves the globalization organizations that enforce the regulations and collections and monetary operations of these multinational corporations. The military may not be privatized, but it has become a form of corporate welfare-- we provide the security for their operations worldwide. I don't think they'd do it, because it would be hard to keep the illusion going, but it would be more accurate to talk about the GE Fleet, the Monsanto Army and the Boeing Air Force, just as sports and entertainment arenas are named.

John Perkins suggests that the answer may be to work through corporations. He Observes:

We've gone from a time when geopolitics was controlled by religious orgs, then governments, now corporations.... the next phase is we the people must take control. It's got to be bottom up.

If it's in our corporations, then we can really address through our shopping habits, through persuasion through embarrassing them, getting them to change. We've seen an amazing example of this in Latin America--- ten countries have voted in leaders standing up to the corporations ."

Glen Beck lost his advertisers and is not off of Fox. Boycotts have had some effects in the past. This article doesn't purport to offer all the answers. The goal is to put it out there that the American Military, as it now stands, is actually not for America and has become a dangerous liability threatening and drastically endangering our near and long term security.

We have a problem. First step is to face it. That's what this article is about. The US military is the number one threat to US security. Its leaders are part of the problem. Yes, we do need some form of military strength, but what we have is a cancerous monster that is totally unaccountable and out of control.

This has nothing to do with the brave soldiers who have volunteered to serve under tragically deceptive circumstances. They are victims just like the rest of we the people of America.

Rob Kall is executive editor, publisher and site architect of [OpEdNews.com](#), Host of the Rob Kall Bottom Up Radio Show (WNJC 1360 AM), President of [Futurehealth, Inc](#), [inventor](#). He is also published regularly on the [Huffingtonpost.com](#)

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MM Book 1 Chapter 2-24

An economy predicated upon endless consumption, where the other fellows well-being is dependent on another's

irresponsibility [vs. stewardship] *to* him [reciprocal evil as reward], is insanity and cannot be maintained without [corporate] slavery; a consumer society can only include a small percentage of human-kind: infinite growth predicated upon finite resources is insane, an impossibility and requires the use of force to secure the increasingly scarce resources [CONSUMPTION IS A DISEASE]; **mercenary [national] armed-forces in the service of the corporate is a crime against humanity** [OUR ADVERSARIAL COVENANT "termed" peace, democracy, liberation] – the death of [our] human-ity to support and maintain an evil, idol systemic is a “crime against God” !! — most social “voices” just parrot the loud corporate-media voice; God is “a still, small voice” that necessitates *pause* to hear, a “Sabbath of time” to comprehend – “peace protest” utilizing confrontation and violence is a contradiction in ideology: PEACE/GOD IS NOT ADVERSARIAL [of the adversary (opposed to God)] !! – our only weapon is our refusal [our "wisdoming" the Word of God] to participate: WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CORPORATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES [the corporate definition: the MARK vs. our Being (Moses), our Doing (Elijah)] !!

MM Book 1 Chapter 2 [web page](#) (widescreen)

MM Book 1 Chapter 2 [web page](#) (blog)

MM Book 2 Chapter 7-16

“The role of private money in politics has become so extortionist, so gross [the "king of the lie"] – term limits increase the power of the bureaucrats and lobbyists as they are the one’s who stick around, they have the working knowledge, the memory” [NPR, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Future of Democracy"] — the privatization of government [all levels], the privatization of foreign policy, etc., [ie., **the military in (mercenary) service of the corporate**; the MIIM] is complete – we are trained [warned] NOT to see !! — business as ** right ** [overriding right to exploit, oppress, etc.]; business as “primary concern” vs. the environment, human rights, civil rights, etc.; business as “sovereign agency” in the service of “private economy”; business as lens, as judge and jury — the unholy transmission of trauma and fear through the generations [cultural collisions; the violent convergence of class and race] — God-given human genius perverted into a weapon, potential subverted, desires extorted, common heritage expropriated; business as instrumentality of pure evil, as expression; the theft of future claim, selfish disregard of future rights; selfish means taking, violating our humanity, our obligation to our children, ie., irresponsible modes of transportation, senseless waste and pollution of our common home, the claim of right to “private” habitation and wealth; THE CLAIM OF PROFIT OVER HUMAN LIFE, THE DIVINE RIGHT OF CAPITAL = MAMMON !! – BUSINESS IS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR ** INHUMANITY ** [THE BEAST WITHIN] !! – the diminishment of our species, of our collective intelligence; WE ARE AMONG THE FALLEN !! – ** ISRAEL WAS, AND IS, AND WILL BE, A *GIFT* TO BE FREELY SHARED AND CLAIMED ** !!

MM Book 2 Chapter 7 [web page](#) (widescreen)

MM Book 2 Chapter 7 [web page](#) (blog)

Evil Growing Deeper 2

YOU CANNOT MANAGE AND CONTROL PEACE, ONLY CONFLICT; democratic-fascism has-and-will engender much "strife" in Iraq / Afghanistan, ensuring the conflict(s) needed by the corporate; media conditioned [social needs] perception(s) of Mammon will be stressed in the rebuilding process, COSTS WILL BE BORNE BY THE VICTIMIZED !! - the US/UK "military mission" has-and-will pause, and then continue "flush with new promises/claimed successes", even some opponents have-and-will be worn down/overcome by the political "promises" made [though never realized]; public opinion(s) Mammonized, the common emotive !! -- A CHRIST-IAN'S GOVERNMENT IS *OF* GOD NOT MEN, THERE IS NO OTHER WAY OF LIFE BUT BY-AND-THROUGH CHRIST(-systemic) [Christ's Blood (our being) and Flesh (our doing)]; again, our "choice" is MAMMON OR MESSIAH !!

Preemptive [preemption tactic] "war on evil" claim; a "just war" theory not applicable as lie even by the best liars; the consequence of sin [terrorism], as justification - "superficial" evil focus, not the "deep" evil of complicity - economic access [material, secular thought] assured, plus the military generation of its own economy [MIIM, ref: [MM Addendum 1](#)] vs. religious/moral [thought] intervention claim(s) !! - an "America First" Foreign Policy ensures contradiction in values/political decision making, all Nation States exude arrogance [disregard, inconsistency towards common obligations]; ** NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE IS EVIL ** - WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A LIFE ?? - many innocent

Iraqi / Afghan lives sacrificed / killed [collateral damage]; Coalition Troops lives lost [**misused as corporate mercenary forces**], together with the initial outright massacre of Iraqi combatants by massive fire-power that could NOT be matched [A MASSIVE FIST USED] - our humanity distanced: SLAUGHTER IS A WAR CRIME, SLAUGHTER IN THE NAME OF GOD IS AN ABSOLUTE EVIL !! - Predestination division into Good [morally superior] and Evil; MORAL ARROGANCE, HUBRIS [wanton insolence or arrogance resulting from excess pride or from passion], WRAPPED IN PATRIOTISM - Christ did NOT pursue the "zealot" option [iniquity purged by MERCY and TRUTH], the "identity" group passions; GOD MAMMONIZED [God Bless "Corporate" America], MAMMON AS SAVIOUR !! - THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN ALL FROM US [the commodification of life], WAGE WAR IN OUR NAMES, TO TAKE MORE !!

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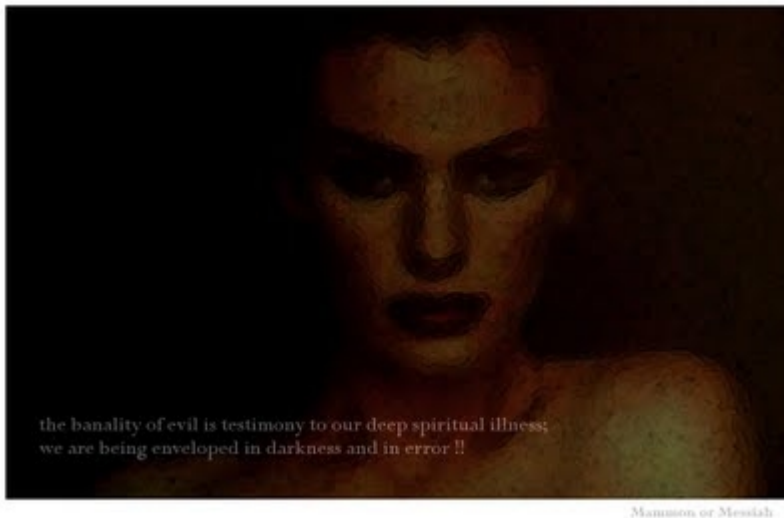
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Deep Spiritual Illness

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Thursday, April 21, 2011

Noam Chomsky: Is the World Too Big to Fail?

Is the World Too Big to Fail?

The Contours of Global Order

by Noam Chomsky [article link](#) [article link](#)

April 21, 2011 | CommonDreams | TomDispatch

This piece is adapted from a talk given in Amsterdam in March.

The democracy uprising in the Arab world has been a spectacular display of courage, dedication, and commitment by popular forces -- coinciding, fortuitously, with a remarkable uprising of tens of thousands in support of working people and democracy in Madison, Wisconsin, and other U.S. cities. If the trajectories of revolt in Cairo and Madison intersected, however, they were headed in opposite directions: in Cairo toward gaining elementary rights denied by the dictatorship, in Madison towards defending rights that had been won in long and hard struggles and are now under severe attack.

Each is a microcosm of tendencies in global society, following varied courses. There are sure to be far-reaching consequences of what is taking place both in the decaying industrial heartland of the richest and most powerful country in human history, and in what President Dwight Eisenhower called "the most strategically important area in the world" -- "a stupendous source of strategic power" and "probably the richest economic prize in the world in the field of foreign investment," in the words of the State Department in the 1940s, a prize that the U.S. intended to keep for itself and its allies in the unfolding New World Order of that day.

Despite all the changes since, there is every reason to suppose that today's policy-makers basically adhere to the judgment of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's influential advisor A.A. Berle that control of the incomparable energy reserves of the Middle East would yield "substantial control of the world." And correspondingly, that loss of control would threaten the

project of global dominance that was clearly articulated during World War II, and that has been sustained in the face of major changes in world order since that day.

From the outset of the war in 1939, Washington anticipated that it would end with the U.S. in a position of overwhelming power. High-level State Department officials and foreign policy specialists met through the wartime years to lay out plans for the postwar world. They delineated a "Grand Area" that the U.S. was to dominate, including the Western hemisphere, the Far East, and the former British empire, with its Middle East energy resources. As Russia began to grind down Nazi armies after Stalingrad, Grand Area goals extended to as much of Eurasia as possible, at least its economic core in Western Europe. Within the Grand Area, the U.S. would maintain "unquestioned power," with "military and economic supremacy," while ensuring the "limitation of any exercise of sovereignty" by states that might interfere with its global designs. The careful wartime plans were soon implemented.

It was always recognized that Europe might choose to follow an independent course. NATO was partially intended to counter this threat. As soon as the official pretext for NATO dissolved in 1989, NATO was expanded to the East in violation of verbal pledges to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. It has since become a U.S.-run intervention force, with far-ranging scope, spelled out by NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who informed a NATO conference that "NATO troops have to guard pipelines that transport oil and gas that is directed for the West," and more generally to protect sea routes used by tankers and other "crucial infrastructure" of the energy system.

Grand Area doctrines clearly license military intervention at will. That conclusion was articulated clearly by the Clinton administration, which declared that the U.S. has the right to use military force to ensure "uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources," and must maintain huge military forces "forward deployed" in Europe and Asia "in order to shape people's opinions about us" and "to shape events that will affect our livelihood and our security."

The same principles governed the invasion of Iraq. As the U.S. failure to impose its will in Iraq was becoming unmistakable, the actual goals of the invasion could no longer be concealed behind pretty rhetoric. In November 2007, the White House issued a Declaration of Principles demanding that U.S. forces must remain indefinitely in Iraq and committing Iraq to privilege American investors. Two months later, President Bush informed Congress that he would reject legislation that might limit the permanent stationing of U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq or "United States control of the oil resources of Iraq" -- demands that the U.S. had to abandon shortly after in the face of Iraqi resistance.

In Tunisia and Egypt, the recent popular uprisings have won impressive victories, but as the Carnegie Endowment reported, while names have changed, the regimes remain: "A change in ruling elites and system of governance is still a distant goal." The report discusses internal barriers to democracy, but ignores the external ones, which as always are significant.

The U.S. and its Western allies are sure to do whatever they can to prevent authentic democracy in the Arab world. To understand why, it is only necessary to look at the studies of Arab opinion conducted by U.S. polling agencies. Though barely reported, they are certainly known to planners. They reveal that by overwhelming majorities, Arabs regard the U.S. and Israel as the major threats they face: the U.S. is so regarded by 90% of Egyptians, in the region generally by over 75%. Some Arabs regard Iran as a threat: 10%. Opposition to U.S. policy is so strong that a majority believes that security would be improved if Iran had nuclear weapons -- in Egypt, 80%. Other figures are similar. If public opinion were to influence policy, the U.S. not only would not control the region, but would be expelled from it, along with its allies, undermining fundamental principles of global dominance.

The Invisible Hand of Power

Support for democracy is the province of ideologists and propagandists. In the real world, elite dislike of democracy is the norm. The evidence is overwhelming that democracy is supported insofar as it contributes to social and economic objectives, a conclusion reluctantly conceded by the more serious scholarship.

Elite contempt for democracy was revealed dramatically in the reaction to the WikiLeaks exposures. Those that received most attention, with euphoric commentary, were cables reporting that Arabs support the U.S. stand on Iran. The reference was to the ruling dictators. The attitudes of the public were unmentioned. The guiding principle was articulated clearly by Carnegie Endowment Middle East specialist Marwan Muasher, formerly a high official of the Jordanian government: "There is nothing wrong, everything is under control." In short, if the dictators support us, what else could matter?

The Muasher doctrine is rational and venerable. To mention just one case that is highly relevant today, in internal discussion in 1958, president Eisenhower expressed concern about "the campaign of hatred" against us in the Arab world, not by governments, but by the people. The National Security Council (NSC) explained that there is a perception in the Arab world that the U.S. supports dictatorships and blocks democracy and development so as to ensure control over the resources of the region. Furthermore, the perception is basically accurate, the NSC concluded, and that is what we should be doing, relying on the Muasher doctrine. Pentagon studies conducted after 9/11 confirmed that the same holds today.

It is normal for the victors to consign history to the trash can, and for victims to take it seriously. Perhaps a few brief observations on this important matter may be useful. Today is not the first occasion when Egypt and the U.S. are facing similar problems, and moving in opposite directions. That was also true in the early nineteenth century.

Economic historians have argued that Egypt was well-placed to undertake rapid economic development at the same time that the U.S. was. Both had rich agriculture, including cotton, the fuel of the early industrial revolution -- though unlike Egypt, the U.S. had to develop cotton production and a work force by conquest, extermination, and slavery, with consequences that are evident right now in the reservations for the survivors and the prisons that have rapidly expanded since the Reagan years to house the superfluous population left by deindustrialization.

One fundamental difference was that the U.S. had gained independence and was therefore free to ignore the prescriptions of economic theory, delivered at the time by Adam Smith in terms rather like those preached to developing societies today. Smith urged the liberated colonies to produce primary products for export and to import superior British manufactures, and certainly not to attempt to monopolize crucial goods, particularly cotton. Any other path, Smith warned, "would retard instead of accelerating the further increase in the value of their annual produce, and would obstruct instead of promoting the progress of their country towards real wealth and greatness."

Having gained their independence, the colonies were free to ignore his advice and to follow England's course of independent state-guided development, with high tariffs to protect industry from British exports, first textiles, later steel and others, and to adopt numerous other devices to accelerate industrial development. The independent Republic also sought to gain a monopoly of cotton so as to "place all other nations at our feet," particularly the British enemy, as the Jacksonian presidents announced when conquering Texas and half of Mexico.

For Egypt, a comparable course was barred by British power. Lord Palmerston declared that "no ideas of fairness [toward Egypt] ought to stand in the way of such great and paramount interests" of Britain as preserving its economic and political hegemony, expressing his "hate" for the "ignorant barbarian" Muhammed Ali who dared to seek an independent course, and deploying Britain's fleet and financial power to terminate Egypt's quest for independence and economic development.

After World War II, when the U.S. displaced Britain as global hegemon, Washington adopted the same stand, making it clear that the U.S. would provide no aid to Egypt unless it adhered to the standard rules for the weak -- which the U.S. continued to violate, imposing high tariffs to bar Egyptian cotton and causing a debilitating dollar shortage. The usual interpretation of market principles.

It is small wonder that the "campaign of hatred" against the U.S. that concerned Eisenhower was based on the recognition that the U.S. supports dictators and blocks democracy and development, as do its allies.

In Adam Smith's defense, it should be added that he recognized what would happen if Britain followed the rules of sound economics, now called "neoliberalism." He warned that if British manufacturers, merchants, and investors turned abroad, they might profit but England would suffer. But he felt that they would be guided by a home bias, so as if by an invisible hand England would be spared the ravages of economic rationality.

The passage is hard to miss. It is the one occurrence of the famous phrase "invisible hand" in *The Wealth of Nations*. The other leading founder of classical economics, David Ricardo, drew similar conclusions, hoping that home bias would lead men of property to "be satisfied with the low rate of profits in their own country, rather than seek a more advantageous

employment for their wealth in foreign nations," feelings that, he added, "I should be sorry to see weakened." Their predictions aside, the instincts of the classical economists were sound.

The Iranian and Chinese "Threats"

The democracy uprising in the Arab world is sometimes compared to Eastern Europe in 1989, but on dubious grounds. In 1989, the democracy uprising was tolerated by the Russians, and supported by western power in accord with standard doctrine: it plainly conformed to economic and strategic objectives, and was therefore a noble achievement, greatly honored, unlike the struggles at the same time "to defend the people's fundamental human rights" in Central America, in the words of the assassinated Archbishop of El Salvador, one of the hundreds of thousands of victims of the military forces armed and trained by Washington. There was no Gorbachev in the West throughout these horrendous years, and there is none today. And Western power remains hostile to democracy in the Arab world for good reasons.

Grand Area doctrines continue to apply to contemporary crises and confrontations. In Western policy-making circles and political commentary the Iranian threat is considered to pose the greatest danger to world order and hence must be the primary focus of U.S. foreign policy, with Europe trailing along politely.

What exactly is the Iranian threat? An authoritative answer is provided by the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence. Reporting on global security last year, they make it clear that the threat is not military. Iran's military spending is "relatively low compared to the rest of the region," they conclude. Its military doctrine is strictly "defensive, designed to slow an invasion and force a diplomatic solution to hostilities." Iran has only "a limited capability to project force beyond its borders." With regard to the nuclear option, "Iran's nuclear program and its willingness to keep open the possibility of developing nuclear weapons is a central part of its deterrent strategy." All quotes.

The brutal clerical regime is doubtless a threat to its own people, though it hardly outranks U.S. allies in that regard. But the threat lies elsewhere, and is ominous indeed. One element is Iran's potential deterrent capacity, an illegitimate exercise of sovereignty that might interfere with U.S. freedom of action in the region. It is glaringly obvious why Iran would seek a deterrent capacity; a look at the military bases and nuclear forces in the region suffices to explain.

Seven years ago, Israeli military historian Martin van Creveld wrote that "The world has witnessed how the United States attacked Iraq for, as it turned out, no reason at all. Had the Iranians not tried to build nuclear weapons, they would be crazy," particularly when they are under constant threat of attack in violation of the UN Charter. Whether they are doing so remains an open question, but perhaps so.

But Iran's threat goes beyond deterrence. It is also seeking to expand its influence in neighboring countries, the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence emphasize, and in this way to "destabilize" the region (in the technical terms of foreign policy discourse). The U.S. invasion and military occupation of Iran's neighbors is "stabilization." Iran's efforts to extend its influence to them are "destabilization," hence plainly illegitimate.

Such usage is routine. Thus the prominent foreign policy analyst James Chace was properly using the term "stability" in its technical sense when he explained that in order to achieve "stability" in Chile it was necessary to "destabilize" the country (by overthrowing the elected government of Salvador Allende and installing the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet). Other concerns about Iran are equally interesting to explore, but perhaps this is enough to reveal the guiding principles and their status in imperial culture. As Franklin Delano Roosevelt's planners emphasized at the dawn of the contemporary world system, the U.S. cannot tolerate "any exercise of sovereignty" that interferes with its global designs.

The U.S. and Europe are united in punishing Iran for its threat to stability, but it is useful to recall how isolated they are. The nonaligned countries have vigorously supported Iran's right to enrich uranium. In the region, Arab public opinion even strongly favors Iranian nuclear weapons. The major regional power, Turkey, voted against the latest U.S.-initiated sanctions motion in the Security Council, along with Brazil, the most admired country of the South. Their disobedience led to sharp censure, not for the first time: Turkey had been bitterly condemned in 2003 when the government followed the will of 95% of the population and refused to participate in the invasion of Iraq, thus demonstrating its weak grasp of democracy, western-style.

After its Security Council misdeed last year, Turkey was warned by Obama's top diplomat on European affairs, Philip Gordon, that it must "demonstrate its commitment to partnership with the West." A scholar with the Council on Foreign Relations asked, "How do we keep the Turks in their lane?" -- following orders like good democrats. Brazil's Lula was admonished in a *New York Times* headline that his effort with Turkey to provide a solution to the uranium enrichment issue outside of the framework of U.S. power was a "Spot on Brazilian Leader's Legacy." In brief, do what we say, or else.

An interesting sidelight, effectively suppressed, is that the Iran-Turkey-Brazil deal was approved in advance by Obama, presumably on the assumption that it would fail, providing an ideological weapon against Iran. When it succeeded, the approval turned to censure, and Washington rammed through a Security Council resolution so weak that China readily signed -- and is now chastised for living up to the letter of the resolution but not Washington's unilateral directives -- in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, for example.

While the U.S. can tolerate Turkish disobedience, though with dismay, China is harder to ignore. The press warns that "China's investors and traders are now filling a vacuum in Iran as businesses from many other nations, especially in Europe, pull out," and in particular, is expanding its dominant role in Iran's energy industries. Washington is reacting with a touch of desperation. The State Department warned China that if it wants to be accepted in the international community -- a technical term referring to the U.S. and whoever happens to agree with it -- then it must not "skirt and evade international responsibilities, [which] are clear": namely, follow U.S. orders. China is unlikely to be impressed.

There is also much concern about the growing Chinese military threat. A recent Pentagon study warned that China's military budget is approaching "one-fifth of what the Pentagon spent to operate and carry out the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," a fraction of the U.S. military budget, of course. China's expansion of military forces might "deny the ability of American warships to operate in international waters off its coast," the *New York Times* added.

Off the coast of China, that is; it has yet to be proposed that the U.S. should eliminate military forces that deny the Caribbean to Chinese warships. China's lack of understanding of rules of international civility is illustrated further by its objections to plans for the advanced nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *George Washington* to join naval exercises a few miles off China's coast, with alleged capacity to strike Beijing.

In contrast, the West understands that such U.S. operations are all undertaken to defend stability and its own security. The liberal *New Republic* expresses its concern that "China sent ten warships through international waters just off the Japanese island of Okinawa." That is indeed a provocation -- unlike the fact, unmentioned, that Washington has converted the island into a major military base in defiance of vehement protests by the people of Okinawa. That is not a provocation, on the standard principle that we own the world.

Deep-seated imperial doctrine aside, there is good reason for China's neighbors to be concerned about its growing military and commercial power. And though Arab opinion supports an Iranian nuclear weapons program, we certainly should not do so. The foreign policy literature is full of proposals as to how to counter the threat. One obvious way is rarely discussed: work to establish a nuclear-weapons-free zone (NWFZ) in the region. The issue arose (again) at the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) conference at United Nations headquarters last May. Egypt, as chair of the 118 nations of the Non-Aligned Movement, called for negotiations on a Middle East NWFZ, as had been agreed by the West, including the U.S., at the 1995 review conference on the NPT.

International support is so overwhelming that Obama formally agreed. It is a fine idea, Washington informed the conference, but not now. Furthermore, the U.S. made clear that Israel must be exempted: no proposal can call for Israel's nuclear program to be placed under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency or for the release of information about "Israeli nuclear facilities and activities." So much for this method of dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat.

Privatizing the Planet

While Grand Area doctrine still prevails, the capacity to implement it has declined. The peak of U.S. power was after World

War II, when it had literally half the world's wealth. But that naturally declined, as other industrial economies recovered from the devastation of the war and decolonization took its agonizing course. By the early 1970s, the U.S. share of global wealth had declined to about 25%, and the industrial world had become tripolar: North America, Europe, and East Asia (then Japan-based).

There was also a sharp change in the U.S. economy in the 1970s, towards financialization and export of production. A variety of factors converged to create a vicious cycle of radical concentration of wealth, primarily in the top fraction of 1% of the population -- mostly CEOs, hedge-fund managers, and the like. That leads to the concentration of political power, hence state policies to increase economic concentration: fiscal policies, rules of corporate governance, deregulation, and much more. Meanwhile the costs of electoral campaigns skyrocketed, driving the parties into the pockets of concentrated capital, increasingly financial: the Republicans reflexively, the Democrats -- by now what used to be moderate Republicans -- not far behind.

Elections have become a charade, run by the public relations industry. After his 2008 victory, Obama won an award from the industry for the best marketing campaign of the year. Executives were euphoric. In the business press they explained that they had been marketing candidates like other commodities since Ronald Reagan, but 2008 was their greatest achievement and would change the style in corporate boardrooms. The 2012 election is expected to cost \$2 billion, mostly in corporate funding. Small wonder that Obama is selecting business leaders for top positions. The public is angry and frustrated, but as long as the Muasher principle prevails, that doesn't matter.

While wealth and power have narrowly concentrated, for most of the population real incomes have stagnated and people have been getting by with increased work hours, debt, and asset inflation, regularly destroyed by the financial crises that began as the regulatory apparatus was dismantled starting in the 1980s.

None of this is problematic for the very wealthy, who benefit from a government insurance policy called "too big to fail." The banks and investment firms can make risky transactions, with rich rewards, and when the system inevitably crashes, they can run to the nanny state for a taxpayer bailout, clutching their copies of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman.

That has been the regular process since the Reagan years, each crisis more extreme than the last -- for the public population, that is. Right now, real unemployment is at Depression levels for much of the population, while Goldman Sachs, one of the main architects of the current crisis, is richer than ever. It has just quietly announced \$17.5 billion in compensation for last year, with CEO Lloyd Blankfein receiving a \$12.6 million bonus while his base salary more than triples.

It wouldn't do to focus attention on such facts as these. Accordingly, propaganda must seek to blame others, in the past few months, public sector workers, their fat salaries, exorbitant pensions, and so on: all fantasy, on the model of Reaganite imagery of black mothers being driven in their limousines to pick up welfare checks -- and other models that need not be mentioned. We all must tighten our belts; almost all, that is.

Teachers are a particularly good target, as part of the deliberate effort to destroy the public education system from kindergarten through the universities by privatization -- again, good for the wealthy, but a disaster for the population, as well as the long-term health of the economy, but that is one of the externalities that is put to the side insofar as market principles prevail.

Another fine target, always, is immigrants. That has been true throughout U.S. history, even more so at times of economic crisis, exacerbated now by a sense that our country is being taken away from us: the white population will soon become a minority. One can understand the anger of aggrieved individuals, but the cruelty of the policy is shocking.

Who are the immigrants targeted? In Eastern Massachusetts, where I live, many are Mayans fleeing genocide in the Guatemalan highlands carried out by Reagan's favorite killers. Others are Mexican victims of Clinton's NAFTA, one of those rare government agreements that managed to harm working people in all three of the participating countries. As NAFTA was rammed through Congress over popular objection in 1994, Clinton also initiated the militarization of the U.S.-Mexican border, previously fairly open. It was understood that Mexican campesinos cannot compete with highly subsidized

U.S. agribusiness, and that Mexican businesses would not survive competition with U.S. multinationals, which must be granted "national treatment" under the mislabeled free trade agreements, a privilege granted only to corporate persons, not those of flesh and blood. Not surprisingly, these measures led to a flood of desperate refugees, and to rising anti-immigrant hysteria by the victims of state-corporate policies at home.

Much the same appears to be happening in Europe, where racism is probably more rampant than in the U.S. One can only watch with wonder as Italy complains about the flow of refugees from Libya, the scene of the first post-World War I genocide, in the now-liberated East, at the hands of Italy's Fascist government. Or when France, still today the main protector of the brutal dictatorships in its former colonies, manages to overlook its hideous atrocities in Africa, while French President Nicolas Sarkozy warns grimly of the "flood of immigrants" and Marine Le Pen objects that he is doing nothing to prevent it. I need not mention Belgium, which may win the prize for what Adam Smith called "the savage injustice of the Europeans."

The rise of neo-fascist parties in much of Europe would be a frightening phenomenon even if we were not to recall what happened on the continent in the recent past. Just imagine the reaction if Jews were being expelled from France to misery and oppression, and then witness the non-reaction when that is happening to Roma, also victims of the Holocaust and Europe's most brutalized population.

In Hungary, the neo-fascist party Jobbik gained 17% of the vote in national elections, perhaps unsurprising when three-quarters of the population feels that they are worse off than under Communist rule. We might be relieved that in Austria the ultra-right Jörg Haider won only 10% of the vote in 2008 -- were it not for the fact that the new Freedom Party, outflanking him from the far right, won more than 17%. It is chilling to recall that, in 1928, the Nazis won less than 3% of the vote in Germany.

In England the British National Party and the English Defence League, on the ultra-racist right, are major forces. (What is happening in Holland you know all too well.) In Germany, Thilo Sarrazin's lament that immigrants are destroying the country was a runaway best-seller, while Chancellor Angela Merkel, though condemning the book, declared that multiculturalism had "utterly failed": the Turks imported to do the dirty work in Germany are failing to become blond and blue-eyed, true Aryans.

Those with a sense of irony may recall that Benjamin Franklin, one of the leading figures of the Enlightenment, warned that the newly liberated colonies should be wary of allowing Germans to immigrate, because they were too swarthy; Swedes as well. Into the twentieth century, ludicrous myths of Anglo-Saxon purity were common in the U.S., including among presidents and other leading figures. Racism in the literary culture has been a rank obscenity; far worse in practice, needless to say. It is much easier to eradicate polio than this horrifying plague, which regularly becomes more virulent in times of economic distress.

I do not want to end without mentioning another externality that is dismissed in market systems: the fate of the species. Systemic risk in the financial system can be remedied by the taxpayer, but no one will come to the rescue if the environment is destroyed. That it must be destroyed is close to an institutional imperative. Business leaders who are conducting propaganda campaigns to convince the population that anthropogenic global warming is a liberal hoax understand full well how grave is the threat, but they must maximize short-term profit and market share. If they don't, someone else will.

This vicious cycle could well turn out to be lethal. To see how grave the danger is, simply have a look at the new Congress in the U.S., propelled into power by business funding and propaganda. Almost all are climate deniers. They have already begun to cut funding for measures that might mitigate environmental catastrophe. Worse, some are true believers; for example, the new head of a subcommittee on the environment who explained that global warming cannot be a problem because God promised Noah that there will not be another flood.

If such things were happening in some small and remote country, we might laugh. Not when they are happening in the richest and most powerful country in the world. And before we laugh, we might also bear in mind that the current economic crisis is traceable in no small measure to the fanatic faith in such dogmas as the efficient market hypothesis, and in general

to what Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, 15 years ago, called the "religion" that markets know best -- which prevented the central bank and the economics profession from taking notice of an \$8 trillion housing bubble that had no basis at all in economic fundamentals, and that devastated the economy when it burst.

All of this, and much more, can proceed as long as the Muashar doctrine prevails. As long as the general population is passive, apathetic, diverted to consumerism or hatred of the vulnerable, then the powerful can do as they please, and those who survive will be left to contemplate the outcome.

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[Noam Chomsky](#) is Institute Professor (retired) at MIT. He is the author of many books and articles on international affairs and social-political issues, and a long-time participant in activist movements. His most recent books include: [Failed States](#), [What We Say Goes](#) (with David Barsamian), [Hegemony or Survival](#), and the [Essential Chomsky](#).

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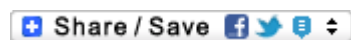
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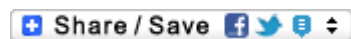
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Wednesday, April 20, 2011

[Robert Scheer: The New Corporate World Order](#)

The New Corporate World Order

by Robert Scheer [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

April 20, 2011 | TruthDig | CommonDreams | TruthOut

The debate over Republicans' insistence on continued tax breaks for the superrich and the corporations they run should come to a screeching halt with the report in Tuesday's Wall Street Journal headlined "Big U.S. Firms Shift Hiring Abroad." Those tax breaks over the past decade, leaving some corporations such as General Electric to pay no taxes at all, were supposed to lead to job creation, but just the opposite has occurred. As the WSJ put it, the multinational companies "cut their work forces in the U.S. by 2.9 million during the 2000s while increasing employment overseas by 2.4 million, new data from the U.S. Commerce Department show."

General Electric, which was bailed out by taxpayers and which stored so much of its profit abroad that it paid no taxes for the past two years, was forced to tighten up, but while cutting its foreign workforce by 1,000 it cut a far more severe 28,000 in the United States. Jeffrey Immelt, the CEO of GE, recently appointed by President Barack Obama as his chief outside economic adviser, admits that this does not involve poorly paid work that Americans don't want, but instead prime jobs: "We've globalized around markets, not cheap labor. The era of globalization around cheap labor is over. Today we go to China, we go to India, because that's where the customers are."

There is a bitter irony in that statement given that consumer purchasing power is down in the U.S. thanks to the devastating collapse of a housing bubble GE Capital fed with suspect mortgage financing that provided the company with well over half of its profits before the crash. The loss of well-paying jobs at multinationals like GE to other nations—54 percent of the GE workforce is foreign—exacerbates the plight of U.S. consumers while making the foreign customers even more attractive.

Of course it will be argued that multinational corporations have the right to arrange their business as they see fit in order to maximize profit. But if that is the case, do beleaguered American taxpayers have to foot the bill? When those corporations run into trouble overseas because of financial hustles or hostile locals and need the diplomatic and military might of the U.S. government to protect their interests abroad, it is again the U.S. taxpayer who must pay to maintain this new world

order. It is an order, as we see with three current wars and a military budget that rivals Cold War highs, that is contributing mightily to the U.S. government debt. More than half of all discretionary spending, the dollars that the Republicans in Congress now want to take out of needed domestic programs, is accounted for by defense spending. That defense spending to support a massive network of military bases and deployed weapons and troops is key to establishing an order in which the interests of American corporations are attended to. If the companies don't feel that way, let them operate under the flag of Liberia or the Cayman Islands.

No less important than U.S. military muscle is the power of the American government to construct and enforce a worldwide trade and finance structure to the advantage of U.S.-based multinational corporations. That is why the companies spend so much money lobbying Congress on matters ranging from regional trade agreements to international banking regulations. It is precisely the impact of trade agreements like NAFTA that has facilitated the erosion of well-paying jobs. And it was the deregulation of international banking standards, led by the U.S. Treasury Department under the past five presidents, that created the conditions for the recent disastrous housing and banking meltdown.

Big government, the devil that Republicans love to inveigh against, is big precisely because it is so active in so many costly ways in serving the interests of our biggest corporations. Corporate lobbyists attest with their every breath that big government and big business are bedmates in a bountiful venture that impoverishes the rest of us. It is time to admit that we are, in practice if not surface appearance, close to the Chinese communist model of state-sponsored capitalism that sacrifices the interests of ordinary workers, be they in the public or private sector, for the exorbitant profits of the superrich. It is the corporations that need big government to protect their interests, and one would hope they would be willing to pay for the services that their government so faithfully renders to make them obscenely wealthy as it studiously ignores the well-being of the rest of us.

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Robert Scheer is editor of Truthdig.com and a regular columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle.

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Tuesday, April 19, 2011

[Chris Hedges: Throw Out the Money Changers](#)

Throw Out the Money Changers

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

April 18, 2011 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

These are remarks Chris Hedges made in Union Square in New York City last Friday during a protest outside a branch office of the Bank of America.

We stand today before the gates of one of our temples of finance. It is a temple where greed and profit are the highest good, where self-worth is determined by the ability to amass wealth and power at the expense of others, where laws are manipulated, rewritten and broken, where the endless treadmill of consumption defines human progress, where fraud and crimes are the tools of business.

The two most destructive forces of human nature—greed and envy—drive the financiers, the bankers, the corporate mandarins and the leaders of our two major political parties, all of whom profit from this system. They place themselves at the center of creation. They disdain or ignore the cries of those below them. They take from us our rights, our dignity and thwart our capacity for resistance. They seek to make us prisoners in our own land. They view human beings and the natural world as mere commodities to exploit until exhaustion or collapse. Human suffering, wars, climate change, poverty, it is all the price of business. Nothing is sacred. The Lord of Profit is the Lord of Death.

The pharisees of high finance who can see us this morning from their cubicles and corner offices mock virtue. Life for them is solely about self-gain. The suffering of the poor is not their concern. The 6 million families thrown out of their homes are not their concern. The tens of millions of pensioners whose retirement savings were wiped out because of the fraud and dishonesty of Wall Street are not their concern. The failure to halt carbon emissions is not their concern. Justice is not their concern. Truth is not their concern. A hungry child is not their concern.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky in “Crime and Punishment” understood the radical evil behind the human yearning not to be ordinary but to be extraordinary, the desire that allows men and women to serve systems of self-glorification and naked greed. Raskolnikov in the novel believes—like those in this temple—that humankind can be divided into two groups. The first is

composed of ordinary people. These ordinary people are meek and submissive. They do little more than reproduce other human beings in their own likeness, grow old and die. And Raskolnikov is dismissive of these lesser forms of human life.

The second group, he believes, is extraordinary. These are, according to Raskolnikov, the Napoleons of the world, those

who flout law and custom, those who shred conventions and traditions to create a finer, more glorious future. Raskolnikov argues that, although we live in the world, we can free ourselves from the consequences of living with others, consequences that will not always be in our favor. The Raskolnikovs of the world place unbridled and total faith in the human intellect. They disdain the attributes of compassion, empathy, beauty, justice and truth. And this demented vision of human existence leads Raskolnikov to murder a pawnbroker and steal her money.

The priests in these corporate temples, in the name of profit, kill with even more ruthlessness, finesse and cunning than Raskolnikov. Corporations let 50,000 people die last year because they could not pay them for proper medical care. They have killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Afghans, Palestinians and Pakistanis, and gleefully watched as the stock price of weapons contractors quadrupled. They have turned cancer into an epidemic in the coal fields of West Virginia where families breathe polluted air, drink poisoned water and watch the Appalachian Mountains blasted into a desolate wasteland while coal companies can make billions. And after looting the U.S. treasury these corporations demand, in the name of austerity, that we abolish food programs for children, heating assistance and medical care for our elderly, and good public education. They demand that we tolerate a permanent underclass that will leave one in six workers without jobs, that condemns tens of millions of Americans to poverty and tosses our mentally ill onto heating grates. Those without power, those whom these corporations deem to be ordinary, are cast aside like human refuse. It is what the god of the market demands.

When Dante enters the “city of woes” in the *Inferno* he hears the cries of “those whose lives earned neither honor nor bad fame,” those rejected by Heaven and Hell, those who dedicated their lives solely to the pursuit of happiness. These are all the “good” people, the ones who never made a fuss, who filled their lives with vain and empty pursuits, harmless perhaps, to amuse themselves, who never took a stand for anything, never risked anything, who went along. They never looked hard at their lives, never felt the need, never wanted to look.

Those who chase the glittering rainbows of the consumer society, who buy into the perverted ideology of consumer culture, become, as Dante knew, moral cowards. They are indoctrinated by our corporate systems of information and remain passive as our legislative, executive and judicial branches of government—tools of the corporate state—strip us of the capacity to resist. Democrat or Republican. Liberal or conservative. It makes no difference. Barack Obama serves corporate interests as assiduously as did George W. Bush. And to place our faith in any party or established institution as a mechanism for reform is to be entranced by the celluloid shadows on the wall of Plato’s cave.

We must defy the cant of consumer culture and recover the primacy in our lives of mercy and justice. And this requires courage, not just physical courage but the harder moral courage of listening to our conscience. If we are to save our country, and our planet, we must turn from exalting the self, to subsuming of the self for our neighbor. Self-sacrifice defies the sickness of corporate ideology. Self-sacrifice mocks opportunities for advancement, money and power. Self-sacrifice smashes the idols of greed and envy. Self-sacrifice demands that we rise up against the abuse, injury and injustice forced upon us by the mandarins of corporate power. There is a profound truth in the biblical admonition “He who loves his life will lose it.”

Life is not only about us. We can never have justice until our neighbor has justice. And we can never recover our freedom until we are willing to sacrifice our comfort for open rebellion. The president has failed us. The Congress has failed us. The courts have failed us. The press has failed us. The universities have failed us. Our process of electoral democracy has failed us. There are no structures or institutions left that have not been contaminated or destroyed by corporations. And this means it is up to us. Civil disobedience, which will entail hardship and suffering, which will be long and difficult, which at its core means self-sacrifice, is the only mechanism left.

The bankers and hedge fund managers, the corporate and governmental elites, are the modern version of the misguided Israelites who prostrated themselves before the golden calf. The sparkle of wealth glitters before them, spurring them faster and faster on the treadmill towards destruction. And they seek to make us worship at their altar. As long as greed inspires us, greed keeps us complicit and silent. But once we defy the religion of unfettered capitalism, once we demand that a society serve the needs of citizens and the ecosystem that sustains life, rather than the needs of the marketplace, once we learn to speak with a new humility and live with a new simplicity, once we love our neighbor as ourself, we break our chains and make hope visible.

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Chris Hedges writes a [regular column](#) for [Truthdig.com](#). Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: [War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning](#), [What Every Person Should Know About War](#), and [American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America](#). His most recent book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

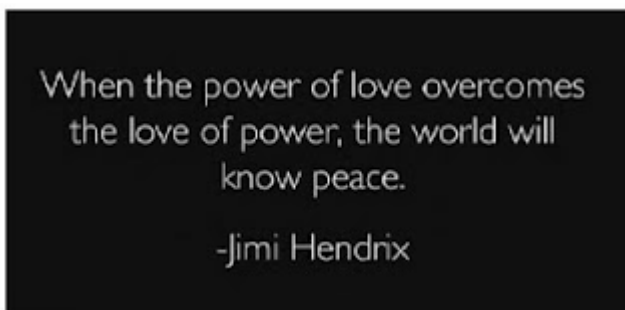
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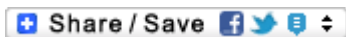
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Saturday, January 1, 2011



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Friday, December 31, 2010

[Kevin Gosztola: Where to Next, Fellow Citizens?](#)

2011 Is Here (Almost): Where to Next, Fellow Citizens?

By Kevin Gosztola [article link](#)

December 31, 2010 | OpEdNews

As 2011 begins, it is clear that many who long for radical change are increasingly desperate for that change. Good-hearted citizens who have been following American politics and the regular conduct of the U.S. government closely for decades are either wholly cynical or are seeking out ways to cope with the current situation. It is not that they have given up on the idea of resistance and change, but they just want to resist and work for change in a way that will help them not be torn to shreds by the talons of a system that continues to support the wants and needs of the top 1% at the expense of those at the bottom.

The collective American population has given up much ground to business or corporate interests. They have allowed political leaders to shift from being representatives of the people to being representatives of financiers, which fund their brand as politicians in Washington. They have conditioned themselves to accept piecemeal change or reform as all that they can get out of this system and they have even developed a keen ability to take measures that are labeled with the word "reform" and celebrate that measure even if it doesn't really reform anything at all. (For example, health "reform," which delivered customers to private insurance companies by making it mandatory for citizens to have health insurance under penalty of law.)

The consistency with which the American people give in to power cannot continue without producing more dire consequences. It cannot continue without certain minorities, like Muslims or Latino immigrants, being persecuted more. It

cannot continue without the few social programs that government allows citizens to lean on in order to survive being lost entirely. It cannot continue without corporations taking more control of politicians and making politicians more indifferent to the misery and poverty of people suffering from the rot, which those in power have created over the past decades.

Thankfully, a small percentage of the American population do not tolerate the coalescing of power, which the military industrial-complex, the security industrial-complex, the congressional industrial-complex and other complexes in this country. They continue to put sacrifice before greed. While many Americans live a life seeking out materials, consumer goods or some kind of social status that can satisfy their ego and make them feel like they have some worth, a number have given up a quest for all that. They are putting their future and well-being on the line by first being curious and asking questions and then often acting upon that curiosity and any information gained by engaging in protest -- acts of resistance.

2011, like every year, has the potential to be [a year of resistance](#). Many instances of resistance happened in 2010, but as is typical, they went unreported or under-reported.

As the TSA stepped up its totalitarian invasion of people's privacy through pat-downs and body scanners and claimed it was a response to a Christmas Day bomber last year, many Americans resisted this turn toward totalitarianism and pledged to not fly or refuse to be groped. In the face of health "reform," single-payer healthcare advocates pledged to double their efforts in working for real healthcare for all, some of them committing to engage in protest and civil resistance. Tens of thousands of Americans gathered in Detroit for the U.S. Social Forum and spent five days developing agendas or plans around key issues in America that desperately need to be confronted by citizens.

The BP Gulf Oil Disaster saw Gulf residents in and around the Gulf area standing up to BP and the government cover-up. They worked to get out the truth about what the disaster had done to the environment and the Gulf seafood, which fishermen had depended on for their livelihood (many of those residents continue to fight).

A number of people stood strong in New York City and in other parts of the U.S. against the bigotry that was on display as a proto-fascist faction of the population worked to prevent Muslims from building a "mosque" at Ground Zero. They responded to the toxic dialogue being promoted by this faction and sought to defend the property rights of all Americans in this country. But, more importantly, they called out the government for continuing wars in Muslim countries, which have turned many Americans into fearful individuals who are suspicious of Muslim people.

Over a thousand people were in Washington, D.C. in October for "Appalachia Rising," a conference and protest event which ended with people from Appalachia calling for an end to mountaintop removal coal mining in an act of civil disobedience in front of the White House where 100 were arrested. And, a couple months later, an act of civil resistance took place in front of the White House. Veterans led the act [as 135 were arrested](#), including Daniel Ellsberg, Chris Hedges, Ray McGovern, and other notable antiwar leaders.

Unreported in the media, [the largest prisoner strike in U.S. history](#) took place in Georgia in the middle of December. The strike was organized through cellphones. They were protesting the living and working conditions they are forced to endure. Most frightening to those in power was probably the fact that different groups in the prisons that are normally fighting against each other were able to lay aside any problems, unite and engage in resistance.

Mega-rallies took place on the National Mall. Glenn Beck had Tea Partiers out by the tens of thousands to "restore honor." Liberals had liberals out calling for "one nation working together." Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert had tens of thousands of people out to "restore sanity." The "Restore Honor" rally was frightening in the same way that viewing newsreels of Weimar Republic leaders before they called themselves Nazis would probably be frightening. The "One Nation Working Together" wound up being virtually useless, a waste. It was a poor pathetic attempt at unity rather than an event aimed at taking a stand. The "Restore Sanity" rally was illuminating of the reality that celebrity comedians cannot be expected to save America. Unless willing to risk their careers entirely, they will promote compromise and pragmatism in politics instead of truly taking on the dangerous forces that have lined up against the people of this nation.

WikiLeaks had a big impact. As the Obama Administration maintained a military escalation in Afghanistan and sought to preserve a permanent troop presence in Iraq (that would be left behind after a "withdrawal" from the country), WikiLeaks

released a "Collateral Murder" video, showing the US military falsely claiming to have been fired at and then laughing at those they killed -- two of them Iraqis working for Reuters as journalists. While the Obama Administration ignored the immorality and illegitimacy of its wars in six different areas of the world (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Colombia, and the Horn of Africa), WikiLeaks exposed what the U.S. had really been doing during its years of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan through two sets of "War Logs." And, as the government engaged in saber-rattling with Iran and North Korea, WikiLeaks made it difficult for the United States to make any aggressive moves before 2010 was over by releasing the U.S. Embassy or diplomatic cables, which put focus on everything the U.S. has done diplomatically in the past decade.

The 2010 Election was instructive. The pendulum in American politics swung back toward the GOP yet polls indicated that most Americans were not all that convinced the Republican Party would lead them to better times. Liberal voters did not get out the vote for Democrats like the Democratic Party had wanted. They did not turn out to vote like Vice President Joe Biden and White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs had chided and commanded them to do. So, the Tea Party helped the GOP deliver huge losses to the Blue Dog Democrats and New Democrats in Congress while around ninety percent of "progressive" Congress leaders kept their jobs. This indicated electoral energy in the future could serve the Democratic Party if they ran "progressive" candidates instead of corporate Democrats.

Instead of making bleak predictions about the future (much of which would be similar to the ones found in [this article](#) and [this article](#)), it seems more valuable to pose some questions. The future year presents these dilemmas, which should be deliberated over contentiously:

- 1) How do we convince more Americans of the need to resist or engage in protest? If they agree that this country has problems, what can be done to motivate them to take action and not wait for government to bring them their deadly brand of change?
- 2) How do we overcome the fear Americans have that we might not be able to reverse certain government agendas or policies? How do we convince them that they should not become survivalists but instead activists or moral citizens who take action to defend values and principles in this country?
- 3) How do we plan to defend those who are fighting the hardest for values and principles, which we hold dear? How do we plan to defend those who are being subject to a witch-hunt by the FBI in Chicago and Minneapolis? How do we plan to defend those we consider heroes and not pariahs so that they can continue to be of use to us and can we defend them without falling back on bankrupt identity politics, which got us a President Barack Obama?
- 4) Additionally, how do we plan to preserve assets that we need to wage struggle -- assets like OpEdNews and others who are part of independent media, assets like the United Antiwar Committee with many organizations that will be invaluable to any struggle for peace and justice in this country?
- 5) What plans do we have to prioritize issues and discuss maturely what we must align ourselves against first in order to truly make progress? Liberal activists are spread thin. We are each aligned behind one cause. But, we may, for example, need to choose militarism and consciously organize to address how that has perverted America.
- 6) What do we plan to do with elections, which often siphon away or dissolve energy that has coalesced to support protest and resistance?
- 7) How do we plan to tap into the power of art and culture and promote the creation and spread of art and culture which is not purely abstract, consumerist, and narcissist but powerful in the way that it comments on government, society or culture--powerful because it allows for discussion on key issues that must be discussed openly in order for consciousness to be shifted and in order for radical change to take shape?

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Thursday, December 30, 2010

[Michael Payne: Congress, The Military, Corporations](#)

Congress, The Military, Corporations: The Collusive Alliance That Fuels America's Wars
By Michael Payne [article link](#)
December 30, 2010 | OpEdNews

America has undergone a dramatic, radical change in the past three decades as the power and influence of the military and corporate America have grown exponentially. These very potent entities are aided and abetted in their closely connected agendas by a combination of the wealthiest Americans, the financial sector, the Congress and the executive and judicial branches of our government. The people of America and our democracy have become subservient to this powerful controlling force.

This is an alliance in which each element takes care of its partners. When the Pentagon demands more funds for its wars, the Congress rubber stamps their requests without condition or debate. When giant defense corporations lobby for more weapons business, the Pentagon readily rewards them with multi billion dollar contracts. When members of Congress face reelection Corporate America feeds them unlimited campaign contributions, thanks to the Supreme Court's infamous ruling in the Citizens United court case.

Washington D.C., once the respected, prestigious seat of the U.S. government has now become so infested with greed, corruption, collusion and incompetence that even an army of exterminators could not take away the stench. The interests of

the American people no longer have a place in the halls of Congress which is now under the control and domination of Wall Street, Corporate America, and the military. There is no important, meaningful legislation that comes before Congress that can be enacted without the tacit approval and involvement of one special interest group or another. A large part of the lobbyists that influence and pressure the decisions in Congress are the special representatives of the defense industry and the banking sector of our nation.

Check out this highly informative [Article](#) that clearly shows the close relationship between the military, the defense industry and the financial sector of America. It clearly illustrates how a revolving door exists for retiring generals to obtain lucrative jobs with defense corporations. Many of these generals and colonels also have side jobs as military analysts on Fox News, CNN or other TV news organizations. In the final paragraphs of the article, retired general Wesley Clark, now a lobbyist and investment banker, makes what's happening in America crystal clear when he says, "It is the militarization of the economy." That is a truly frightening thought.

America now finds itself in a deep economic crisis in which cities, states and citizens are under siege and fighting for their very survival. Those in power and control from the White House on down have virtually no positive, innovative ideas on how to stop the hemorrhaging and restore some semblance of stability in America; they are preoccupied with war.

As the bleeding continues to sap the economic strength of America and the future grows ever bleaker, we are hearing the voices of "fiscal responsibility" putting forth their negative messages of how to address and solve our problems. Just listen to this latest example of this type of thinking on what should be done to solve our fiscal problems. Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, generally referred to as "Dr. No", the spending hawk, warned recently that America would experience "apocalyptic pain" with 15-18 percent unemployment and the "middle class destroyed" if it didn't get its fiscal house in order.

He said "everything should be on the table for cost cutting." When have we heard that one before? Does he mean everything to include the monumental costs of the Pentagon and its \$1.3 trillion annual budget, the unfunded wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the more than 750 military installations around the world and the myriad of other costs associated with pursuing a never ending agenda of perpetual war? Or is he a typical Republican that will simply concentrate on cuts to Social Security, Medicare, unemployment benefits, and all other entitlements?

President Obama's deficit commission and many Republican senators have been very vocal about the need to reduce our monumental deficits but they speak with forked tongues. The just extended tax cuts for the ultra rich of America were not a part of this deficit discussion, yet they will contribute mega billions to deficit growth. The Congress approves funding for the Pentagon and the wars time and time again with absolutely no debate whatsoever about how it relates to the deficits.

How can our current president continue to let these incompetent, so-called representatives of the people allow the tax cuts for the rich and the costs of the wars to get a pass on the issue of deficit reduction and, at the same time, remain passive and silent as they threaten to cut social security, Medicare and other important entitlements? Mr. Obama is doing a great disservice to the American people and this nation when he allows these obvious supporters of the Military-Industrial-Corporate America Complex to dominate the discussion and the debate.

Yes, of course, America needs a strong military to protect its citizens; Yes, America needs a strong industrial sector to fuel its economy. But what America does not need and can no longer afford is a combination of the two whose common objective is to pursue needless and extremely costly wars in foreign lands and to continue to produce weapons of destruction to fuel those wars. America also needs a strong Congress to solve our many problems but it does not need a Congress that is totally subservient to the demands of the military and corporate America.

One way or another America must free itself of the stranglehold of this powerful alliance and the agenda of permanent war by which it sustains itself. It cannot allow Corporate America and the military, with the aid of this Congress to dominate and determine this nation's national agenda and direction. We must find the ways to restore a viable democracy in America.

The last thing that America needs right now is an economic collapse but that may be inevitable if this powerful alliance

continues to control this nation's agenda and waste the remaining wealth of America on war. Such a dismal thought may be very unnerving for Americans to contemplate but it may be the only way that the funding for the military-industrial machine can be ended, and the only real solution for this terrible ongoing dilemma we face.

Michael Payne is an independent progressive who writes articles about domestic social and political matters as well as American foreign policy. His major goal is to convince Americans that our perpetual wars must end before they bankrupt our nation. His articles have appeared on Online Journal, Information Clearing House, Peak Oil, Google News and websites around the world.

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Washington Uses Arms Sales To Achieve Global Supremacy

By Rick Rozoff [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Paul Craig Roberts: Incipient Fascist State: America Has Gone Away

Incipient Fascist State: America Has Gone Away

by Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 29, 2010 | Global Research | OpEdNews

Anyone who doesn't believe that the US is an incipient fascist state needs only to consult the latest assault on civil liberty by Fox News (sic). Instead of informing citizens, Fox News (sic) informs on citizens. Jason Ditz [reports](#) (antiwar.com Dec. 28) that Fox News (sic) "no longer content to simply shill for a growing police state," turned in a grandmother to the Department of Homeland Security for making "anti-American comments."

The media have segued into the police attitude, which regards insistence on civil liberties and references to the Constitution as signs of extremism, especially when the Constitution is invoked in defense of dissent or privacy or placarded on a bumper sticker. President George W. Bush set the scene when he declared: "you are with us or against us."

Bush's words demonstrate a frightening decline in our government's respect for dissent since the presidency of John F. Kennedy. In a speech to the Newspaper Publishers Association in 1961, President Kennedy said:

"No president should fear public scrutiny of his program, for from that scrutiny comes understanding, and from that understanding comes support or opposition; and both are necessary. . . . Without debate, without criticism, no administration and no country can succeed, and no republic can survive. That is why the Athenian law makers once decreed it a crime for any citizen to shrink from controversy. And that is why our press was protected by the First Amendment."

The press is not protected, Kennedy told the newspaper publishers, in order that it can amuse and entertain, emphasize the trivial, or simply tell the public what it wants to hear. The press is protected so that it can find and report facts and, thus, inform, arouse "and sometimes even anger public opinion."

In a statement unlikely to be repeated by an American president, Kennedy told the newspaper publishers: "I'm not asking your newspapers to support an administration, but I am asking your help in the tremendous task of informing and alerting the American people, for I have complete confidence in the response and dedication of our citizens whenever they are fully informed."

The America of Kennedy's day and the America of today are two different worlds. In America today the media are expected to lie for the government in order to prevent the people from finding out what the government is up to. If polls can be believed, Americans brainwashed and programmed by O'Reilly, Hannity, Beck, and Limbaugh want Bradley Manning and Julian Assange torn limb from limb for informing Americans of the criminal acts of their government. Politicians and journalists are screeching for their execution.

President Kennedy told the Newspaper Publishers Association that "it is to the printing press, the recorder of man's deeds, the keeper of his conscience, the courier of his news, that we look for strength and assistance, confident that with your help man will be what he was born to be: Free and Independent." Who can imagine a Bill Clinton, a George W. Bush, or a Barack Obama saying such a thing today?

Today the press is a propaganda ministry for the government. Any member who departs from his duty to lie and spin the news is expelled from the fraternity. A public increasingly unemployed, broke and homeless is told that they have vast enemies plotting to destroy them in the absence of annual trillion dollar expenditures for the military/security complex, wars lasting decades, no-fly lists, unlimited spying and collecting of dossiers on citizens supplemented by neighbors reporting on neighbors, full body scanners at airports, shopping centers, metro and train stations, traffic checks, and the equivalence of treason with the uttering of a truth.

Two years ago when he came into office President Obama admitted that no one knew what the military mission was in Afghanistan, including the president himself, but that he would find a mission and define it. On his recent trip to Afghanistan, Obama came up with the mission: to make the families of the troops safe in America, his version of Bush's "we have to kill them over there before they kill us over here."

No one snorted with derision or even mildly giggled. Neither the New York Times nor Fox News (sic) dared to wonder if perhaps, maybe, murdering and displacing large numbers of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen and US support for Israel's similar treatment of Lebanese and Palestinians might be creating a hostile environment that could breed terrorists. If there still is such a thing as the Newspaper Publishers Association, its members are incapable of such an unpatriotic thought.

Today no one believes that our country's success depends on an informed public and a free press. America's success depends on its financial and military hegemony over the world. Any information inconsistent with the indispensable people's god-given right to dominate the world must be suppressed and the messenger discredited and destroyed.

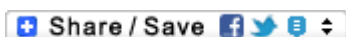
Now that the press has voluntarily shed its First Amendment rights, the government is working to redefine free speech as a privilege limited to the media, not a right of citizens. Thus, the insistence that WikiLeaks is not a media organization and Fox News (sic) turning in a citizen for exercising free speech. Washington's assault on Assange and WikiLeaks is an assault on what remains of the US Constitution. When we cheer for WikiLeaks' demise, we are cheering for our own.

Paul Craig Roberts was an editor of the Wall Street Journal and an Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. His latest book, [How The Economy Was Lost](#), has just been published by CounterPunch/AK Press.

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Wednesday, December 29, 2010

Richard Clark: Is an economic collapse being prepared? If so, for whose benefit?

Is an economic collapse being prepared? If so, for whose benefit?

By Richard Clark [article link](#)

December 28, 2010 | OpEdNews

"From now on, depressions will be scientifically created."

-- Congressman Charles A. Lindbergh Sr., 1913

What follows is an essay that is largely based on information from an [article](#) which recently appeared at [Zerohedge.com](#) (source [article](#): Neithercorp Press).

Because we subconsciously associate the continuance of our life with the variable health of the *particular economic structure* in which we live, we tend to become unwitting devotees to *its continued existence* -- even if an abundance of evidence shows that it is hopelessly corrupt and condemned to failure. We foolishly deny that this corrupt system (and the currency that supports it) is doomed because, even though it has beaten us bloody, we have never known anything else.

Because of this entrenched way of perceiving things, it is difficult to convince most people that the economic system in which they live is actually being used, in ways they cannot easily understand, to destroy their futures completely. And so, to try and explain to them that this very economy, which they naively regard as theirs, is being *prepared*, by persons unknown, to self-destruct, and take them down with it-- well, that is a very difficult task indeed.

Many people hit a proverbial wall on this issue because they simply cannot fathom that certain groups of men (globalists and central bankers) view money and economy in completely different terms than they do.

The average American lives within a tiny conceptual box when it comes to the mechanics and motivations of finance. They think that their monetary desires and drives are exactly the same as a globalist's. But, what they don't realize is that the very "box" they think in . . . was BUILT by globalists. This is why the actions of big banks, and the decisions of our mostly corporate-establishment-run government, seem so insane in the face of common sense. We try to toss off their behavior as "idiocy," but the reality is that their goals are highly deliberate, and are so far outside what we have been taught to expect, that many of us can't begin to understand what they are doing and why.

In the past we have covered numerous instances in which global bankers have admitted to fraud on a massive scale -- fraud the consequences of which are now in the process of crushing our already fragile economy. Most of us have read about how the privately held Federal Reserve knowingly facilitated the creation of the housing bubble, as well as how it is now inflating a Treasury bubble which is soon to implode. We have all read about Goldman Sachs and its efforts to promote and sell toxic derivatives all over the world while at the same time betting against those derivatives on the open market. We have read about the manipulation of gold and silver markets by companies like JP Morgan, which have recently been exposed by whistleblowers and GATA [investigations](#). And, most importantly, we've heard about the growing weakness of the U.S. dollar and the possibility of severe currency devaluation.

These revelations raise questions, which is natural, but they also elicit misconceptions and reckless knee-jerk reactions, especially when broaching the fact that the illegal strategies of international banksters are part of a larger agenda, namely to *engineer an economic collapse*.

* * *

Examined below are some of the most common narrow-minded responses to the proposition that banksters are about to attempt, or are in the process of attempting, an *engineered economic collapse*. After each listing, an explanation is provided as to why the response is narrow minded.

Narrow minded response #1: *The economy is too complex to be controlled by just a handful of people*"

This response often comes from people who are inclined to make quick presumptions about our economic system, rather than actually taking the time to educate themselves on how the system really works. From the outside looking in, the world of finance appears chaotic -- a mixture of mathematical and legal standards swirling in a maelstrom of mass psychology. Many Americans are either frightened off by this seemingly complicated field of study, or they too quickly find it "boring" and "not worth" their time. This, however, does not stop them from making knee-jerk *presumptions* about how the system works.

The problem is that just because a person participates in *his* economy daily, it does not mean he has any useful or real understanding of how the *larger system* actually operates. An analogy: Many watch television on a daily basis, but few have any real idea how the picture actually gets onto the screen, or how to fix a television once it stops working. Sadly, our egocentric culture has led a substantial portion of the public to imagine that they are experts on EVERYTHING, and thus, true researchers in the fields of economics and globalism get reactions like the one above, constantly.

At bottom, once all the quasi-technical biz-babble used by mainstream talking heads is removed from the equation, economics is really rather simple. Supply and Demand will always be at the center of any and every economy, regardless of the political atmosphere it exists in. These two fundamental factors can be manipulated to a point -- by the creation of artificial supply, or the conjuring of false demand. This manipulation, by way of artificial supply and the conjuring of false demand, is achieved in many ways by global bankers, but primarily through the domination that comes by way of their ability to do three things:

- * issue currency,
- * change interest rates at will,
- * inject, or remove, incredible sums of money, into and from, any market.

A perfect [example](#) is the suppression of silver prices by JP Morgan.

Another good example of economic manipulation is the Federal Reserve's strategy, during the "90s, under Alan Greenspan, of artificially lowering interest rates, thus allowing banks to issue credit at historical low levels for over a decade. Linked [here](#) is an article from Ron Paul's "Texas Straight Talk" dated March, 2007 (before the housing market even began its full swan-dive). In it, Paul discusses *the Federal Reserve's direct role in the creation of the housing bubble*.

Men like [Ron Paul](#), [Peter Schiff](#), [Gerald Celente](#), [Jim Rogers](#), and many others were able to predict, long beforehand, that the Federal Reserve's actions were creating an explosive mortgage and credit bubble, yet we are supposed to believe that the Federal Reserve had "no idea" that their actions would result in a debt implosion? This is not plausible.

[Catherine Austin Fitts](#), former Assistant Secretary of Housing and Commissioner of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development under the first Bush Administration [stated](#) that the mortgage bubble was *absolutely not an accident*, and that she had witnessed outright and deliberate fraud on the part of the U.S. government and the Federal Reserve Bank *in creating the bubble*. The fact that disturbed her most, however, was her discovery that only a small handful of international banks were responsible for the perpetuation of toxic mortgage debt, not just in America, but around the world:

Goldman Sachs (one of the primary globalist banks involved in the igniting of the debt crisis) was [caught](#) red-handed selling toxic derivatives to investors and governments all over the planet *while at the same time betting against those derivatives on the market*. Goldman even bet against mortgage securities the bank itself created!

This is like a car manufacturer selling vehicles with brake lines known to be faulty, and then placing bets in some casino that a significant percentage of their customers will crash and burn. Essentially it is blatant and sociopathic fraud! Goldman's actions directly contributed to credit collapses in numerous countries, including Greece, and here in the U.S.

The idea that global banks can turn the economy on and off like a light switch may be a stretch, but the vast majority of evidence shows that they do have the ability to shift the direction of markets to a point, as well as the ability to spur the

growth of bubbles that eventually lead to recessions, depressions, and beyond. In fact, if one examines the U.S. economy from the inception of the Federal Reserve in 1913, one finds that the past century has been nothing but a series of engineered equity bubbles designed to slowly hobble, but not completely cripple, our financial system and our currency. But [why](#)?

Now that we have established that market collapses can be created by a small handful of bankers and that it is done knowingly and strategically, let's move on to the next most common sheeple-like talking point.

Narrow minded response #2: *Yes, international banks triggered the meltdown, but the "greed of Capitalism" is truly to blame, or, as a variant, "it's all the Republican Party's fault."*

Barack Obama received far more in corporate campaign donations (including donations from BP and Exxon) than McCain did. Obama has consistently surrounded himself with banksters and corporate lobbyists, including various hobgoblins from the bowels of Goldman Sachs. BOTH major parties are owned and operated by global banks. This is the cold hard and undeniable truth of our current political-economic system. There is no way around it. Learn it, accept it as reality, and stop trying to blame one party or the other for problems that both sides helped create! (If you cannot do this, your view of our current state of affairs will always be badly skewed and your insights on our socioeconomic problems will be worthless.)

Since the inception of the Federal Reserve in 1913, all markets and even our own currency have become more and more vulnerable to manipulation by our bankster elite. We have lived our entire lives in a [rigged](#) market, not the "free market" we've been brainwashed into believing in. To blame capitalism for our current dire circumstances is not only naïve, it is dangerous.

Narrow minded response #3: *Global banks would never engineer the collapse of the U.S. economy or the dollar -- it makes them too much money"*

This often-heard song and dance ties in with the #2 comment above. Again, here, the assumption is that the globalists only do what they do out of an "uncontrollable greed for money." The problem with this is twofold:

1) the end concern for the Elite is NOT the accumulation of riches. Central bankers have the ability to PRINT all the money they want from thin air! Remember, the Federal Reserve has never been subjected to a full audit, meaning they could easily create billions if not trillions without any oversight whatsoever. Greed for money, to them, is surely an absurd notion. What they *do* want, more than anything else, however, is power over people, institutions and society as a whole. Essentially they want control over every living human being. All other concerns are secondary.

2) the U.S. economy is NOT indispensable to global banks. While we see the economy as an extension of our culture and ourselves, the Elites see financial systems as mere tools in the pursuit of a greater goal: World Government. To better understand this, imagine you are building a house. Once your saw has fulfilled its intended role of cutting up all the boards, do you cling to the saw, or do you throw it aside and pick up a hammer to begin assembling the carefully prepared parts? This is how globalists look at financial systems. They are perfectly willing to cast off the U.S. economy like a snake shedding skin -- if it brings them closer to attaining their ultimate aim.

The same goes for the dollar. The Greenback may be the premier world reserve currency right now, but that can, and likely will, change very quickly over the next couple years. The dollar is a device that has outlived its usefulness as far as global bankers are concerned. The IMF has on several occasions made it clear that they eventually intend for the SDR (Special Drawing Rights) to replace the dollar as the world reserve currency, and they have openly [admitted](#) that it (the SDR) will one day be established as a global currency. IMF press releases make this development sound far off and away, but SDR accumulations by countries around the world have risen dramatically in the past year. This along with other factors we will cover (namely China's preparations to dump their U.S. T-bond holdings) show that IMF actions indicate they are preparing for a collapse of the dollar now!

Narrow minded response #4: *China would never dump U.S. Treasuries because it would hurt them as much as it hurts us"*

The theory that China is somehow fused to the U.S. in a kind of symbiotic seesaw relationship that can never be broken is so ingrained among mainstream American financial analysts it simply will not die, regardless of how much contradictory evidence you show them. It really is like a mental disease which causes mainstream media pundits to go into involuntary Tourettic convulsions every time you mention the words "Treasury bond dump."

America and China are not conjoined twins, and one **can** survive without the other. Simply stated, China has re-engineered its economy towards consumption and importation rather than relying on exports. The IMF has [talked](#) about this on many occasions with apparent excitement.

China has also finalized the ASEAN trading bloc which has combined export markets that are at least equal to that of the US -- meaning, China *already* has another place to send its exports besides America.

Most importantly, China must increase their currency's value if their new consumer-based system is to survive. Allowing the Yuan to rise sharply in value will revitalize the buying power of the Chinese populace, making greater consumption possible. Indeed, China MUST dump their Treasury holdings and pump up the Yuan **if** they are to hold their economy together. And, the Federal Reserve has given China every reason to turn its back on Treasuries through its (the Fed's) never ending liquidity injections. This is not to say that a U.S. collapse will not affect them; it would negatively affect the entire world. However, China has positioned itself to survive, and perhaps even thrive with their economic expansions into Africa and even [Afghanistan](#), and their new financial agreements with Germany.

Finally, the Chinese have been very forthcoming over the past week about plans to drop Treasuries. China has dumped nearly 8% of their U.S. T-Bond holdings just since January, with recent record-breaking monthly T-bond dumps. They have openly [admitted](#) to a plan to diversify away from the dollar.

Narrow minded response #5: *Sure, bankers took advantage, but it's really the American people's fault for getting suckered"*

Yes, a sizable portion of the American public can be gut wrenchingly stupid. The problem with this argument, however, is that when it is taken too far it becomes an attempt to divert blame away from the criminals and place it on the victims. If you knowingly leave your front door unlocked in a bad neighborhood and you find your home ransacked the next day, then you are partly responsible. But, we cannot forget that the neighborhood is "bad" in the first place *because of the criminals*, not because of the people who don't lock their doors.

Just because global banks *can* sucker the public doesn't mean they *should*, or that they cannot be judged for it. The crime ultimately rests on *those men who made the conscious effort to destroy this country*, and the blame rests with them as well. One sees this attempt to parlay the economic collapse into the lap of the American people very often lately, especially from bankers who now claim that it's the American public's fault entirely. Why the people's fault? Because they will not spend more, they will not take on more debt, they will not take on more risk, and they will not believe hard enough in the recovery that never was. (Imagine a serial rapist behind a podium admonishing women for carrying pepper spray! The American people were only protecting themselves, just as women do with a canister of pepper spray. Going ever further into debt -- to satisfy the banksters?! -- would have been foolhardy.)

Narrow minded response #6: *Ok, maybe the banks are causing a collapse, but to say the government is helping them is just crazy conspiracy theory"*

Then why is it that the Federal Reserve has never been fully audited? Why is it that when Ron Paul tried to pass the HR 1207 Federal Reserve Transparency Bill, it was muddled in committees and then eventually derailed? *Why is it that banks like Goldman Sachs have been caught, yes caught, **setting the stage for an economic implosion in this country***, yet no government indictments have been formed to criminally prosecute them? Why are these men still roaming free, like locusts, to continue [pillaging](#) at will? Are we supposed to feel lucky that we get table scraps like seeing Bernie Madoff get put behind bars, *while the Federal Reserve commits Ponzi fraud on a scale that dwarfs his?*

Our government (both major parties) is owned lock stock and barrel. This is why there are no satisfactory answers for the questions posed above. Elements of the U.S. Government, including almost every president since 1912, have not only turned a blind eye to Globalist activities, they have offered their full support to the bankers.

Nixon removed the dollar from the gold standard in 1971 giving the Fed free reign to print as much fiat currency as they wished, without limitations. In 1980 the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act was passed essentially placing all banks under the rules of the Federal Reserve. The Glass-Steagall Act, which had since the Great Depression kept investment banks and depository banks separate, was recklessly repealed under a Republican majority in the Senate, its approval finalized by Democratic President Bill Clinton in 1999.

Thirty years ago, banks that held your home mortgage were for the most part required to keep that mortgage until it was finally paid off. However, a series of government decisions spanning that period, and influenced by global banks, allowed for the "securitization" (bunching, slicing and dicing and then peddling the pieces) of mortgages, leading to the creation of "derivatives," which were then used by corporate mobster/banksters like Goldman Sachs in a way that began to destroy our financial system.

Last, but certainly not least, both the Bush and Obama Administrations pressured Congress into passing highly unpopular bailout legislation which basically rewarded the same banks that created the credit crisis with trillions in taxpayer dollars (yes, the bailouts are now actually in the trillions, not billions). This led to the coining of the term "too big to fail" (or "too big to jail"). Our Government has been nothing but complicit in the banker takeover of this country. To debate this is to invite embarrassment.

I haven't even scratched the surface of *government* involvement in the collapse of our economy. Cases like the Savings and Loan crisis of the 1980's led to serious prosecutions *and jail time* for more than 1100 criminal bankers, but this only caused the government to respond by changing investigation rules *so as to make it even more difficult to catch the high-level fraudsters in the act!* Linked [here](#) is a videotaped discussion between Max Keiser and bank regulator Prof. William K. Black who outlines *our government's complicity in the breakdown of the country it is mandated to protect.*

Conclusion

Elites destroy cultures to make way for new philosophies -- *their* philosophies. Its not so much "conspiracy theory" as it is a widely admitted methodology. Corporate globalists believe in global government on *their* terms and they barely try to hide it. If someone thinks this sounds "fantastical," then they haven't been paying the slightest attention. When one understands how Elites view the economy, and realizes their primary motivations, the fact that they purposely triggered a collapse is perfectly logical.

Nothing, besides all out war, inspires more fear and desperation in a society than a financial upheaval. Such upheavals allow changes in our collective psychology that were not possible previously. Most people tend to falter under such an overwhelming threat, and turn towards any authority (or fake authority) they think will save them from harm. Some people scoff at this idea, but it is likely they have never actually been in the wake of a real national catastrophe before. Men, especially those who know little of themselves, can change quickly in the face of calamity. The Elites recognize this, engineer tragedy, then waltz into the aftermath to merrily lord over the rubble, emerging stronger and more powerful than ever before. At the profound expense of everyone else.

Will their plan work this time? I think not, but I'm an optimist (no, really). The pursuit of total control and total power is, after all, rather infantile, albeit on an impressively psychotic level. However, if those who want to make us forget who the real enemy is, are successful in that quest, then I think our corrupt elites do have a chance at success. In fact, that is how they have remained successful to this point.

Only now does the average man have such immense knowledge at his fingertips that there's a chance that the most intelligent amongst them will be successful in ending the line of behind-the-scenes despots and tyrants that have reigned for centuries. If only the average man was not so easily deterred by WMD's (Weapons of Mass Distraction), our chances of victory would be much better, but we must work with what we have, and hope for the best.

The Elites will likely ignite some wars, tempt us into in-fighting, and fabricate enemies like alQaeda out of the ether. Whatever happens, our eyes must remain fixed on the root of the problem: the banksters, and nothing else.

Globalists are not invincible, they are not untouchable, they are not even all that brilliant. They are human, and they have made many mistakes. In some ways, the engineering of an economic meltdown really changes nothing. Hired thugs, useful idiots, corrupt officials, even hyperinflation -- all are tiny obstacles when considering the world we could have if the Elites were finally made to face the reckoning they deserve.

Americans once took on the greatest empire on Earth. We once took a feared king to task. Are a bunch of frothing corporate banksters really so daunting? All that is needed is a principled movement with the will to see justice done, and I believe we have that already.

Richard Clark: Several years after receiving my M.A. in social science (interdisciplinary studies) I was an instructor at S.F. State University for a year, but then went back to designing automated machinery, and then tech writing, in Silicon Valley. I've always been more interested in political economics and what's going on behind the scenes in politics, than in mechanical engineering, and because of that I've rarely worked more than 6 months a year, devoting much of the rest of the year to reading and writing about that which interests me most.

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Leah Bolger: Failure to Obey a Lawful Order

Failure to Obey a Lawful Order

by Leah Bolger [article link](#)

December 29, 2010 | CommonDreams

Imagine you are taking a walk in a park and you witness a mugging. What would you do? Would you look the other way or would you try to stop it? If you are one who would try to stop it, then what would you do when it is your government that is committing the crime? As citizens we are told that we should call our Congressman or write a letter to the editor when we are dissatisfied with our government. But writing a letter to the editor is no more effective at stopping the crimes of our government than it is at stopping a mugging.

On December 16th, 2010, I participated in an act of civil resistance in an attempt to stop my government from continuing to commit crimes—namely the ongoing wars of aggression in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the middle of a heavy snowstorm, I was arrested along with 130 other people in front of the White House who refused to move off the sidewalk when ordered to by the police. We were not violent, we carried no weapons, and we damaged no property. We were, however, willing to disobey the police as an act of resistance to our government; as a way of saying “No” to the senseless slaughter of innocent people; “No” to outrageous war profiteering, “No” to our government’s flagrant disregard of international law, “No” to the squandering of hundreds of billions of dollars.

Although it is we who were treated like criminals—handcuffed, arrested and charged, we are not the ones ordering drone strikes or sending in troops. We are not the ones using illegal weapons and poisoning the earth. We are not the ones with blood on our hands. The real criminals continue unabated, shamelessly claiming that they are “making progress,” and unabashedly announcing that they plan to continue their crimes for many years to come.

None of us expected that these illegal wars of aggression would immediately stop due to our simple action, but we did hope that we would send a message--a message that there are citizens who do not support our government’s illegal wars and occupations; a message to the world that we are shamed by the actions of our government and we will do everything we

can to stop it. It is our sincere hope that this action will be a spark that ignites the consciousness of others; that our refusal to obey and willingness to put our liberty on the line will give them the courage of their own convictions and they will also begin to act in resistance as well.

We will continue to defy and disobey, to resist and to rebel. We will not stop until the real criminals have been stopped. We will keep pushing the public to wake up to the horror of war and to take responsibility for ending it. We will rail against these crimes of inhumanity with all the force we can muster. We will continue to try with our voices and our bodies, to throw ourselves onto the machine of greed and killing.

“Failure to Obey a Lawful Order” is a misdemeanor and carries a maximum penalty of a \$1000 fine. So what is the penalty for failure to obey international law?

Leah Bolger spent 20 years on active duty in the U.S. Navy and retired in 2000 at the rank of Commander. She is currently a full-time peace activist and serves as the National Vice-President of [Veterans For Peace](#).

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Tuesday, December 28, 2010

[Paul Craig Roberts: 2011: Dissent is what rescues Democracy](#)

2011: "Dissent is what rescues Democracy"

by Dr. Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 27, 2010 | Global Research | ICH

"Dissent is what rescues democracy from a quiet death behind closed doors."--Lewis H. Lapham

The year 2011 will bring Americans a larger and more intrusive police state, more unemployment and home foreclosures, no economic recovery, more disregard by the US government of US law, international law, the Constitution, and truth, more suspicion and distrust from allies, more hostility from the rest of the world, and new heights of media sycophancy.

2011 is shaping up as the terminal year for American democracy. The Republican Party has degenerated into a party of Brownshirts, and voter frustrations with the worsening economic crisis and military occupations gone awry are likely to bring Republicans to power in 2012. With them would come their doctrines of executive primacy over Congress, the judiciary, law, and the Constitution and America's rightful hegemony over the world.

If not already obvious, 2010 has made clear that the US government does not care a whit for the opinions of citizens. The TSA is unequivocal that it will reach no accommodation with Americans other than the violations of their persons that it imposes by its unaccountable power. As for public opposition to war, the Associated Press reported on December 16 that "Defense Secretary Robert Gates says the U.S. can't let public opinion sway its commitment to Afghanistan." Gates stated bluntly what has been known for some time: the idea is passe that government in a democracy serves the will of the people. If this quaint notion is still found in civics books, it will soon be edited out.

In *Gag Rule*, a masterful account of the suppression of dissent and the stifling of democracy, Lewis H. Lapham writes that candor is a necessary virtue if democracies are to survive their follies and crimes. But where in America today can candor be found? Certainly not in the councils of government. Attorney General John Ashcroft complained of candor-mongers to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Americans who insist on speaking their minds, Ashcroft declared, "scare people with phantoms of lost liberty," "aid terrorists," diminish our resolve," and "give ammunition to America's enemies."

As the Department of Justice (sic) sees it, when the ACLU defends habeas corpus it is defending the ability of terrorists to blow up Americans, and when the ACLU defends the First Amendment it is defending exposures of the lies and deceptions that are the necessary scaffolding for the government's pretense that it is doing God's will while Satan speaks through the voices of dissent.

Neither is candor a trait in which the American media finds comfort. The neoconservative press functions as propaganda ministry for hegemonic American empire, and the "liberal" New York Times serves the same master. It was the New York Times that gave credence to the Bush regime's lies about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and it was the New York Times that guaranteed Bush's re-election by spiking the story that Bush was committing felonies by spying on Americans without obtaining warrants. Conservatives rant about the "liberal media" as if it were a vast subversive force, but they owe their beloved wars and coverups of the Bush regimes' crimes to the New York Times.

With truth the declared enemy of the fantasy world in which the government, media, and public reside, the nation has turned on whistleblowers. Bradley Manning, who allegedly provided the media with the video made by US troops of their wanton, fun-filled slaughter of newsmen and civilians, has been abused in solitary confinement for six months. Murdering civilians is a war crime, and as General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at the National Press Club on February 17, 2006, "It is the absolute responsibility of everybody in uniform to disobey an order that is either illegal or immoral" and to make such orders known. If Manning is the source of the leak, he has been wrongfully imprisoned for meeting his military responsibility. The media have yet to make the point that the person who reported the crime, not the persons who committed it, is the one who has been imprisoned, and without a trial.

The lawlessness of the US government, which has been creeping up on us for decades, broke into a full gallop in the years of the Bush/Cheney/Obama regimes. Today the government operates above the law, yet maintains that it is a democracy bringing the same to Muslims by force of arms, only briefly being sidetracked by sponsoring a military coup against democracy in Honduras and attempting to overthrow the democratic government in Venezuela.

As 2011 dawns, public discourse in America has the country primed for a fascist dictatorship. The situation will be worse by 2012. The most uncomfortable truth that emerges from the WikiLeaks saga is that American public discourse consists of cries for revenge against those who tell us truths. The vicious mendacity of the US government knows no restraint. Whether or not international law can save Julian Assange from the clutches of the Americans or death by a government black ops unit, both executive and legislative branches are working assiduously to establish the National Security State as the highest value and truth as its greatest enemy.

America's future is the world of Winston Smith.

Paul Craig Roberts is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Monday, December 27, 2010

Ralph J Dolan: The Dream Of Democracy

The Dream Of Democracy

by Ralph J Dolan [article link](#)

December 27, 2010 | Global Research

Finally it must be recognized that lying is an essential ingredient of statecraft in these times. Governments lie in an attempt to uphold their legitimacy in the hearts of the people.

Democratic governments do not exist. Not in this world. Many attempts have been made, many faltering half-measures. All ultimately have failed to live up to the dream. But the people hold the dream of democracy close to their hearts. The people understand that systems of justice are a sham without democracy. Governments lie in order to create the illusion of democracy so that the people are more willing to comply. Governments create an illusion and then act in ways that advance the political and economic interests of a small group.

This is the political and economic reality of these times.

In the eyes of politicians the people are mere clay to be molded to be compliant to whatever governments do. The people do not understand political realities. The people are incapable of understanding what is in their best interests. The people are worn down by the day-to-day burdens of survival. They do not have the time nor the leisure to cast a critical eye upon the behaviors of their governments. This is exactly where governments want the people to be. Overburdened, distracted, desperate, voiceless, disorganized people are more easily led.

Such a phenomenon as an enlightened populace is possible. Such a phenomenon as a populace with enough leisure time, enough energy left over after the basic necessities of life are met, is quite possible. Already the modern world has the understanding of economic systems that tend to create a society in which the people are relatively content, enlightened and prosperous so that they can be engaged in the political, economic and social issues of the day. An equitable distribution of the wealth of a nation among all the people is a basic necessity of such a society. In such a society the idea of democracy has a chance of coming to fruition.

Why do we not see democratic governments thriving among the nations of the world? It is because, despite the flowery rhetoric about freedom and brotherhood, the world has not yet outgrown totalitarian political and economic ideologies.

Asserting that a totalitarian political and economic ideology still dominates our world suggests that there exists a ruling class. How can it be denied? From country to country one sees ruling families, juntas, crony capitalism, brutal regimes, fat oligarchs amidst vast squalor, domination of the political and economic mechanisms by small, wealthy, entrenched, ruthless, privileged groups.

This is the global ruling class. They are an elite club. They look out for each others' political and economic interests. They lead double lives. They are all double agents. They pretend to serve one master but actually serve an entirely different master. They wear masks. In public they sing of the glories of the idea of democratic governance, of the march toward the liberation of the human race from tyranny and oppression. In private they ridicule such notions, despise the people and seek to manipulate the dumb masses to augment their own power, wealth and prestige.

These are the gods of the ruling class: power, wealth and prestige. They vie with each other to see who can gain the uppermost pinnacle of the global economic pyramid. They all individually seek to make of their own individual selves into a Sun God to whom all the masses bow in adoration.

The very last thing the ruling class wants is to create a political and economic landscape in which the people are well-educated, liberated from the day-to-day grind for survival and engaged in the issues related to their own governance. If the people are thriving, then too much of the wealth of the nations is being squandered. If the people are thriving, then they

may grow into such engaged citizens that they challenge the political leadership, make them accountable, demand openness and honesty, infiltrate the entrenched political mechanisms with the attitudes and demands of a true democracy.

In order to preserve the interests of the ruling class the people must not thrive. The people must not have economic security, good schools, good health care, fair bargaining powers in the work place, clean, safe non-oppressive working conditions, strong healthy families, vibrant communities, equal justice for all. These characteristics of a good life, of a healthy, strong, unified, happy populace are well within reach. The resources are there in abundance. But it does not happen. The wealth of nations is sucked up to the top of the economic pyramid into the hands of the ruling class. They have no intention of sharing it with the dumb masses. The dumb masses must be kept in a state of want, desperation, subservience.

The dumb masses are the many. The ruling class is the few. How is it that the few so effectively dominates the many?

Those who accumulate the wealth, by whatever means, own everything and can bend the political and economic conditions to their advantage. They run governments from 'behind the scenes' by putting up the money and using political and social leverage to get people who do their bidding into the seats of power. Thereby do governments and supreme courts become 'business friendly.' Thereby economic mechanisms are created that willfully deprive the people of the fruits of their own labor, willfully extort those fruits in the name of offering the people the privilege of working for a pittance. The rulers rule! The rulers have a right to rule by the mere fact that they rule. Their wealth allows them to buy protection. They maintain standing armies of mercenaries. They create strong, well-equipped, obedient police forces to protect their properties, to protect the very idea of private property. Might makes right! The people are there to be manipulated, to be exploited, to be worked to death and then thrown in the garbage heap. The history books are filled with the false heroics and the false humanity of tyrants.

The ruling class is composed of individuals in all the countries of the world who get together in lush conference rooms and lay out in detail how they will manipulate the political realities so that the people are always afraid. Some enemy is about to 'come over the wall' to rape and pillage. A fearful populace is more likely to acquiesce to the implementation of draconian and costly policies which claim to be necessary to keep the people safe. The individuals that comprise the ruling class get together and lay out economic conditions that are widely advertised to be in the best interests of the people. But the inevitable outcome of these policies is that the people are not made safe nor do they prosper but rather are increasingly cowering, increasingly impoverished, increasingly subservient. The inevitable outcome is that those in power have even more control, more wealth, more undisputed dominance over the people.

This is the game plan!

Every human being who chooses to step into a position in the ruling class has chosen to wear a mask, to be a double agent, to say one thing and do something completely different, to live a lie. These human beings have agreed that in order to advance their own interests they must take on the mantle of ruthlessness. They must turn their hearts into stone. Their eyes must no longer reflect the light. They have agreed to offer their lives in service to a brutal machine - a government, to do everything in their power to advance the interests of that machine and to dispose of anyone who dares get in the way. They must lie continuously. They convince themselves that the atrocities that they perpetrate or condone are for the 'greater good' of the people, that the people are too innocent, too naive to understand, that they in the ruling class itself are the chosen ones to carry the heavy burden of leadership. For them democracy is an impossibility. As a form of governance democracy is ludicrous, laughable. But the game of democracy must be played on the surface of brute reality because the hearts of the people have been infected by the dream of democracy.

The people are like a powerful, slumbering dragon. Even as it slumbers this dragon is filled with a sense of injustice. None of the pomp and grandeur of the contemporary mechanisms of jurisprudence are able to cause it to be blinded to the pervasive, underlying injustice that prevails in the world. A small, seemingly insignificant event, some last straw like the imposition of harsh governmental austerity programs, might be the breeze that awakens the dragon. Once awakened it begins to unfold its wings and feels a hunger in its belly. One small act of courage, of standing up to the powers-that-be, can inspire other acts of courage. One brave individual like Rosa Parks may be looked upon as creating the spark that grows into a conflagration. But the conflagration is a cumulative mass movement. In the process tyrants are bought low and the will of the people begins to assert itself. It is true that in this vulnerable time some new tyrant may come and take the

place of the old tyrant. But the fear of this happening again cannot prevent new experimentation. What is life, after all? What is all this cosmic evolution if not one experiment laid on top of another experiment? At some point the people will hit the exact, right cord. The critical mass will have been attained. The collective consciousness will have arrived at that blessed plateau where justice 'flows down like water' and true brotherhood prevails.

This dream is embedded in the hearts of all humans and cannot die.

Ralph J Dolan, Vietnam Veteran

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[Chris Hedges: 2011: A Brave New Dystopia](#)

2011: A Brave New Dystopia

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 27, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

The two greatest visions of a future dystopia were George Orwell's "1984" and Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World." The debate, between those who watched our descent towards corporate totalitarianism, was who was right. Would we be, as Orwell wrote, dominated by a repressive surveillance and security state that used crude and violent forms of control? Or would we be, as Huxley envisioned, entranced by entertainment and spectacle, captivated by technology and seduced by profligate consumption to embrace our own oppression? It turns out Orwell and Huxley were both right. Huxley saw the first stage of our enslavement. Orwell saw the second.

We have been gradually disempowered by a corporate state that, as Huxley foresaw, seduced and manipulated us through sensual gratification, cheap mass-produced goods, boundless credit, political theater and amusement. While we were entertained, the regulations that once kept predatory corporate power in check were dismantled, the laws that once protected us were rewritten and we were impoverished. Now that credit is drying up, good jobs for the working class are gone forever and mass-produced goods are unaffordable, we find ourselves transported from "Brave New World" to "1984." The state, crippled by massive deficits, endless war and corporate malfeasance, is sliding toward bankruptcy. It is time for Big Brother to take over from Huxley's feelies, the orgy-porgy and the centrifugal bumble-puppy. We are moving from a society where we are skillfully manipulated by lies and illusions to one where we are overtly controlled.

Orwell warned of a world where books were banned. Huxley warned of a world where no one wanted to read books. Orwell warned of a state of permanent war and fear. Huxley warned of a culture diverted by mindless pleasure. Orwell warned of a state where every conversation and thought was monitored and dissent was brutally punished. Huxley warned of a state where a population, preoccupied by trivia and gossip, no longer cared about truth or information. Orwell saw us frightened into submission. Huxley saw us seduced into submission. But Huxley, we are discovering, was merely the prelude to Orwell. Huxley understood the process by which we would be complicit in our own enslavement. Orwell understood the enslavement. Now that the corporate coup is over, we stand naked and defenseless. We are beginning to understand, as Karl Marx knew, that unfettered and unregulated capitalism is a brutal and revolutionary force that exploits human beings and the natural world until exhaustion or collapse.

"The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake," Orwell wrote in "1984." "We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from all the oligarchies of the past, in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and

that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.”

The political philosopher Sheldon Wolin uses the term “inverted totalitarianism” in his book “Democracy Incorporated” to describe our political system. It is a term that would make sense to Huxley. In inverted totalitarianism, the sophisticated technologies of corporate control, intimidation and mass manipulation, which far surpass those employed by previous totalitarian states, are effectively masked by the glitter, noise and abundance of a consumer society. Political participation and civil liberties are gradually surrendered. The corporation state, hiding behind the smokescreen of the public relations industry, the entertainment industry and the tawdry materialism of a consumer society, devours us from the inside out. It owes no allegiance to us or the nation. It feasts upon our carcass.

The corporate state does not find its expression in a demagogue or charismatic leader. It is defined by the anonymity and facelessness of the corporation. Corporations, who hire attractive spokespeople like Barack Obama, control the uses of science, technology, education and mass communication. They control the messages in movies and television. And, as in “Brave New World,” they use these tools of communication to bolster tyranny. Our systems of mass communication, as Wolin writes, “block out, eliminate whatever might introduce qualification, ambiguity, or dialogue, anything that might weaken or complicate the holistic force of their creation, to its total impression.”

The result is a monochromatic system of information. Celebrity courtiers, masquerading as journalists, experts and specialists, identify our problems and patiently explain the parameters. All those who argue outside the imposed parameters are dismissed as irrelevant cranks, extremists or members of a radical left. Prescient social critics, from Ralph Nader to Noam Chomsky, are banished. Acceptable opinions have a range of A to B. The culture, under the tutelage of these corporate courtiers, becomes, as Huxley noted, a world of cheerful conformity, as well as an endless and finally fatal optimism. We busy ourselves buying products that promise to change our lives, make us more beautiful, confident or successful as we are steadily stripped of rights, money and influence. All messages we receive through these systems of communication, whether on the nightly news or talk shows like “Oprah,” promise a brighter, happier tomorrow. And this, as Wolin points out, is “the same ideology that invites corporate executives to exaggerate profits and conceal losses, but always with a sunny face.” We have been entranced, as Wolin writes, by “continuous technological advances” that “encourage elaborate fantasies of individual prowess, eternal youthfulness, beauty through surgery, actions measured in nanoseconds: a dream-laden culture of ever-expanding control and possibility, whose denizens are prone to fantasies because the vast majority have imagination but little scientific knowledge.”

Our manufacturing base has been dismantled. Speculators and swindlers have looted the U.S. Treasury and stolen billions from small shareholders who had set aside money for retirement or college. Civil liberties, including habeas corpus and protection from warrantless wiretapping, have been taken away. Basic services, including public education and health care, have been handed over to the corporations to exploit for profit. The few who raise voices of dissent, who refuse to engage in the corporate happy talk, are derided by the corporate establishment as freaks.

Attitudes and temperament have been cleverly engineered by the corporate state, as with Huxley’s pliant characters in “Brave New World.” The book’s protagonist, Bernard Marx, turns in frustration to his girlfriend Lenina:

“Don’t you wish you were free, Lenina?” he asks.

“I don’t know that you mean. I am free, free to have the most wonderful time. Everybody’s happy nowadays.”

He laughed, “Yes, ‘Everybody’s happy nowadays.’ We have been giving the children that at five. But wouldn’t you like to be free to be happy in some other way, Lenina? In your own way, for example; not in everybody else’s way.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” she repeated.

The façade is crumbling. And as more and more people realize that they have been used and robbed, we will move swiftly from Huxley's "Brave New World" to Orwell's "1984." The public, at some point, will have to face some very unpleasant truths. The good-paying jobs are not coming back. The largest deficits in human history mean that we are trapped in a debt peonage system that will be used by the corporate state to eradicate the last vestiges of social protection for citizens, including Social Security. The state has devolved from a capitalist democracy to neo-feudalism. And when these truths become apparent, anger will replace the corporate-imposed cheerful conformity. The bleakness of our post-industrial pockets, where some 40 million Americans live in a state of poverty and tens of millions in a category called "near poverty," coupled with the lack of credit to save families from foreclosures, bank repossessions and bankruptcy from medical bills, means that inverted totalitarianism will no longer work.

We increasingly live in Orwell's Oceania, not Huxley's The World State. Osama bin Laden plays the role assumed by Emmanuel Goldstein in "1984." Goldstein, in the novel, is the public face of terror. His evil machinations and clandestine acts of violence dominate the nightly news. Goldstein's image appears each day on Oceania's television screens as part of the nation's "Two Minutes of Hate" daily ritual. And without the intervention of the state, Goldstein, like bin Laden, will kill you. All excesses are justified in the titanic fight against evil personified.

The psychological torture of Pvt. Bradley Manning—who has now been imprisoned for seven months without being convicted of any crime—mirrors the breaking of the dissident Winston Smith at the end of "1984." Manning is being held as a "maximum custody detainee" in the brig at Marine Corps Base Quantico, in Virginia. He spends 23 of every 24 hours alone. He is denied exercise. He cannot have a pillow or sheets for his bed. Army doctors have been plying him with antidepressants. The cruder forms of torture of the Gestapo have been replaced with refined Orwellian techniques, largely developed by government psychologists, to turn dissidents like Manning into vegetables. We break souls as well as bodies. It is more effective. Now we can all be taken to Orwell's dreaded Room 101 to become compliant and harmless. These "special administrative measures" are regularly imposed on our dissidents, including Syed Fahad Hashmi, who was imprisoned under similar conditions for three years before going to trial. The techniques have psychologically maimed thousands of detainees in our black sites around the globe. They are the staple form of control in our maximum security prisons where the corporate state makes war on our most politically astute underclass—African-Americans. It all presages the shift from Huxley to Orwell.

"Never again will you be capable of ordinary human feeling," Winston Smith's torturer tells him in "1984." "Everything will be dead inside you. Never again will you be capable of love, or friendship, or joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity. You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty and then we shall fill you with ourselves."

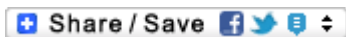
The noose is tightening. The era of amusement is being replaced by the era of repression. Tens of millions of citizens have had their e-mails and phone records turned over to the government. We are the most monitored and spied-on citizenry in human history. Many of us have our daily routine caught on dozens of security cameras. Our proclivities and habits are recorded on the Internet. Our profiles are electronically generated. Our bodies are patted down at airports and filmed by scanners. And public service announcements, car inspection stickers, and public transportation posters constantly urge us to report suspicious activity. The enemy is everywhere.

Those who do not comply with the dictates of the war on terror, a war which, as Orwell noted, is endless, are brutally silenced. The draconian security measures used to cripple protests at the G-20 gatherings in Pittsburgh and Toronto were wildly disproportionate for the level of street activity. But they sent a clear message—DO NOT TRY THIS. The FBI's targeting of antiwar and Palestinian activists, which in late September saw agents raid homes in Minneapolis and Chicago, is a harbinger of what is to come for all who dare defy the state's official Newspeak. The agents—our Thought Police—seized phones, computers, documents and other personal belongings. Subpoenas to appear before a grand jury have since been served on 26 people. The subpoenas cite federal law prohibiting "providing material support or resources to designated foreign terrorist organizations." Terror, even for those who have nothing to do with terror, becomes the blunt instrument used by Big Brother to protect us from ourselves.

“Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating?” Orwell wrote. “It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined. A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but more merciless as it refines itself.”
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Chris Hedges writes [a regular column for Truthdig.com](#). Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: [War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning](#), [What Every Person Should Know About War](#), and [American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America](#). His most recent book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

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Mammon or Messiah research

Monday, December 27, 2010

David DeGraw: Journalism of Appeasement

Journalism of Appeasement. Corruption, Smoke and Mirrors

by David DeGraw [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 27, 2010 | AmpedStatus | Global Research

Here's a brief summation of my recent reporting:

If we continue to let our politicians and wealthy members of society live in comfort, free from the consequences of their actions, we are complicit in our own demise.

Our country is so overrun with corruption, we cannot remain passive and expect things to get any better.

The economy is propped up by smoke and mirrors and will inevitably collapse. Without immediately breaking up the banks and holding the thieves accountable, we will continue on our downward spiral with increasingly severe and devastating consequences.

These are extremely unpleasant truths that we are now forced to confront. We have to act now. If you are not calling for revolution or organizing, you are either unaware of what's happening around you, horribly naïve or a fascist sympathizer.

In response to statements like those above, I've been exchanging emails with colleagues (journalists and news editors) who have become "uncomfortable" with my reporting style and been saying some variation of the following: "You're being too radical. This is too extreme for us to publish."

While I appreciate their opinions, I want to make something 100% clear. I am fully aware that these words are harsh, and may turn off some people. However, in extreme times, telling the truth will make you sound extreme. Ultimately, I don't mind if you think I sound "too extreme," I don't care if I make people "uncomfortable," or if, in your opinion, I've become "too radical." Try telling that to the 52 million Americans who are now living in poverty. Tell that to the millions of American families who have lost their homes and jobs. Tell that to the 59 million people who can't afford health insurance. Tell that to the overwhelming majority of the population who are stressed out, living paycheck to paycheck, buried in debt they will never get out of and desperately struggling to make ends meet.

Try telling that to all the people who have emailed me explaining their dire situations due to this economic crisis. Tell that to all the people I personally know who have taken major pay cuts.

I will not participate in the journalism of appeasement.

What has to happen for you to stop being a status quo supporting naïve journalist and realize that we are in the middle of a war? More accurately, it is a slaughter. An all-time record-breaking slaughter.

I refuse to "normalize the unthinkable."

Here's a list of stats that I am sure you are already extremely sick of hearing, what we have already passively accepted as "the new normal," some new ALL-TIME RECORDS for you:

- * 3 million families foreclosed upon;
- * 30 million people in need of employment;
- * 43 million people on food stamps;
- * 52 million people in poverty;
- * 59 million people without healthcare;
- * 239 million living paycheck to paycheck;
- * \$144 billion in Wall Street bonuses;
- * \$13 Trillion in investible wealth within 1% of US population.

Ask yourself this question: How sick and depraved of a society do you have to live in to get an outcome like this?

We now have the highest and most severe inequality of wealth in the history of the United States. We have witnessed an economic shock and awe campaign, acts of financial terrorism have impoverished tens of millions of people and put our future prospects in an urgently dire situation. We know who is responsible for it, yet nothing is done to hold them accountable, and most astounding of all, the people responsible for this (a financial terrorism network) are still in power!

This is the largest criminal racket in world history. We need prosecutions under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, right now!

Another important point in response to emails that I get: when I write that Obama is a puppet, some people still get upset with me. Are you kidding me? What kind of president allows this to happen without holding people accountable? What kind of president allows our tax dollars to be taken and handed out as all-time record-breaking bonuses while we have an all-time record-breaking number of people living in poverty? What kind of president puts career-long preeminent economic imperialists Tim Geithner and Larry Summers in charge of our economy, and supports Ben Bernanke's reconfirmation as Fed Chairman? This is all absurd and inexcusable! These three people would be in prison if we lived in a nation ruled by law. Obama is a bullshit artist - Period, Full Stop.

This is a quintessential banana republic ruled by a puppet president. If that truth is too much for you to handle, stop reading this right now and go retreat into your "reality TV" world while you still can.

Let me defer to Senator Bernie Sanders. He recently said what I've been screaming about and gave us one of those very rare moments when truth was actually spoken on the Senate floor:

“There is a war going on in this country and I'm not referring to the war in Iraq or the war in Afghanistan. I'm talking about a war being waged by some of the wealthiest and most powerful people in this country against the working families of the United States of America, against the disappearing and shrinking middle class of our country.

The reality is that many of the nation's billionaires are on the war path. They want more, more, more. Their greed has no end, and apparently there is very little concern for our country or for the people of this country if it gets in the way of the accumulation of more and more wealth, and more and more power....

Today... the crooks on Wall Street... the people whose actions, illegal actions, reckless actions, have resulted in millions of Americans losing their jobs, their homes, their savings... After we bailed them out, the CEOs today are now earning more money than they did before the bailout.... While the middle class of this country collapses and the rich become much richer... the United States now has, by far, the most unequal distribution of income and wealth of any major country on earth.

When we were in school, we used to read the text books which talked about the banana republics in Latin America... about countries in which a handful of people owned and controlled most of the wealth in those countries. Well, guess what? That is exactly what is happening in the United States today.”

What will it take to make you understand this? Don't you get it? This is a war! This is a mass slaughter carried out by economic policy. This is the elimination of the existence of a middle class. These are financial terrorists committing crimes against humanity. Our country is being attacked! My family is under attack! My child is under attack! I am under attack!

We are under attack!

I know that TV news propaganda confuses people, but on a basic and profound level, whether people want to admit it or not, the overwhelming majority of the population knows that our nation has been taken over by a [global banking cartel](#). We know that our future has gone up in flames. We know that [both political parties](#) have been paid off and don't represent us. If the politicians don't drastically change course and start representing the people, we have a duty, a Constitutional commitment and obligation to launch a revolution.

If you are not calling for revolution or organizing, you are either unaware of what's happening around you, horribly naïve or a fascist sympathizer. If we continue to let our politicians and wealthy members of society live in comfort, free from the consequences of their actions, we are complicit in our own demise.

Our country is so overrun with corruption, we cannot remain passive and expect things to get any better. The economy is now propped up by smoke and mirrors and will inevitably collapse. Without immediately breaking up the banks and holding the thieves accountable, we will continue on our downward spiral with increasingly severe and devastating consequences. These are extremely unpleasant truths that we are now forced to confront. We have to act now.

People who still delude themselves into apathy by clinging to the belief that giving trillions of dollars to the banks had to be done, are buying into a baseless propaganda line. Use your commonsense. What kind of fool would think that the best way to solve the economic crisis would be to give trillions of dollars to the people who are most responsible for causing it. That is absurd! Instead of holding them accountable for the crimes they committed, they were given trillions in taxpayer funds which they used to further consolidate power and give themselves all-time record-breaking bonuses - and they deliberately impoverished tens of millions of people in the process. People are either confused as to what happened or they are in denial and afraid to confront the colossal crime committed. Whatever the case may be, there is no escaping the consequences. The implications are staggering. If you think it's been bad over the past two years, get ready, you haven't seen anything yet.

So are we going to start fighting back, or should I just move my family to another country? Most everyone who understands our economic and political situation are having this debate now and contemplating moving outside the country.

Is that what we should do? Should we just leave the country and let it collapse?

Those who are aware have reached the point where our survival instinct is kicking in. Fight or flight?

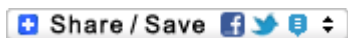
I'm ready to fight, but I'm not ready to fight a losing battle. We all need to do what is best for our family.

Are you with me? Or should I start packing now?

David DeGraw is the founder and editor of AmpedStatus.com. He is the author of [The Economic Elite Vs. The People of the United States](#). His new book is [The Road Through 2012](#).

Global Research [Articles](#) by David DeGraw

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:26 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Sunday, December 26, 2010

[Jay Walljasper: All That We Share](#)

Welcome to a new kind of movement—one that reshapes how we think about ownership and cooperation.

All That We Share

by Jay Walljasper [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 25, 2010 | YES! Magazine | CommonDreams

Welcome to the commons. The term may be unfamiliar, but the idea has been around for centuries. The commons is a new use of an old word, meaning "what we share"—and it offers fresh hope for a saner, safer, more enjoyable future. The commons refers to a wealth of valuable assets that belong to everyone. These range from clean air to wildlife preserves; from the judicial system to the Internet. Some are bestowed to us by nature; others are the product of cooperative human creativity. Certain elements of the commons are [entirely new](#) - think of Wikipedia. Others are centuries old-like colorful words and phrases from all the world's languages. Anyone can use the commons, so long as there is enough left for everyone else. This is why finite commons, such as natural resources, must be sustainably and equitably managed. But many other forms of the commons can be freely tapped. Today's hip-hop and rock stars, for instance, "appropriate" (quote) the work of soul singers, jazz swingers, blues wailers, gospel shouters, hillbilly pickers, and balladeers going back a long time—and we are all richer for it. That's the greatest strength of the commons. It's an inheritance shared by all humans, which increases in value as people draw upon its riches.

At least that's [how the commons has worked throughout history](#), fostering democratic, cultural, technological, medical, economic, and humanitarian advances. But this natural cycle of sharing is now under assault. As the market economy becomes the yardstick for measuring the worth of everything, more people are grabbing portions of the commons as their private property. Many essential elements of society—from ecosystems to scientific knowledge to public services—are slipping through our hands and into the pockets of the rich and powerful.

The Wealth We Lost

One example of what we're losing comes right out of today's headlines about spiraling health care costs. The creation of many widely prescribed drugs, which millions of people depend upon, was funded in large part by government grants. But the exclusive right to sell pharmaceuticals developed with public money was handed over to drug companies with almost nothing asked in return. That means we pay exorbitant prices for medicine developed with our tax dollars, and many poor people are denied access to treatments that might save their lives.

Another even more absurd example concerns a subject that you would think stirs no controversy-yoga. Through centuries of evolution as a spiritual practice, any new yoga poses or techniques were automatically incorporated into the tradition for everyone to use. But beginning in 1978 an Indian named Bikram Choudhury, now based in Beverly Hills, copyrighted certain long-used hatha yoga poses and sequences as his own invention, Bikram Yoga, and he now threatens other yoga studios teaching these techniques with lawsuits.

The good news is that people all around us are beginning to take back the commons.

Neighbors rising up to keep their library open, improve their park, or find new funding for public schools. Greens [fighting the draining of wetlands](#) and the dumping of toxic waste in inner-city neighborhoods. Digital activists providing access to the Internet in poor communities and challenging corporate plans to limit access to information. Indigenous people instilling their children with a sense of tradition and hope. Young social entrepreneurs and software engineers seeking new mechanisms for people to share ideas.

Not all of these people think of themselves as commons activists. Some may not even be familiar with the term. Vel Wiley, the longtime director of Milwaukee's public access TV channels, stood up at a commons event and declared, "When I was asked to be a part of this conference, I thought the commons was for people like Greenpeace, an environmental cause. But I understand now that I have been advocating for the commons over the last twenty years. I realize we're not just a small group advocating that the people have a voice in the broadcasting media. We're all a part of something so much bigger, and that helps us to keep going."

It's not necessary that everyone adopt the word commons. What matters is that people understand that what we share together (and how we share it) is as important as what we possess individually.

Parallels to the Origins of Environmentalism

Growing interest in the commons today resembles the origins of the environmental movement in the 1960s. At that time, there was little talk about ecology or the greening of anything. There was, however, a lot of concern about air pollution, pesticides, litter, the loss of wilderness, declining wildlife populations, the death of Lake Erie, [toxic substances oozing into rivers](#), oil spills fouling the oceans, lead paint poisoning inner-city kids, suburbia swallowing up the countryside, mountains of trash piling up in landfills, and unsustainable farming practices ravaging the land. Yet the word environment did not become a household word until the first Earth Day-April 22, 1970. Bringing an assortment of issues together under the banner of environmentalism highlighted the connections between what until then had been seen as separate causes and fueled the unexpected growth of the environmental movement over the next few years.

The commons offers the same promise of uniting people concerned about the common good in many forms into a new kind of movement that reshapes how people think about the nature of ownership and the importance of collaboration in modern society.

A New Way of Thinking and Living

More than just a philosophical and political framework for understanding what's gone wrong, the commons furnishes us a toolkit for fixing problems. Local activists eager to revitalize their community and protect open space are setting up land trusts-a form of community ownership distinct from both private property and government management. Savvy Web users use the [cooperative properties of the Internet](#) to challenge corporations who want to undermine this shared resource by fencing it off for private gain. Villagers and city dwellers around the world [assert that water is a commons](#), which cannot be sold, depleted, or controlled by anyone.

These kinds of efforts extend the meaning of the commons beyond something you own to a bigger idea: how we live together. Peter Linebaugh, a preeminent historian of the commons, has coined the word "commoning" to describe the growing efforts he sees to protect and strengthen the things we share. "I want to stress the point that the commons is an activity rather than just a material resource," he says. "That brings in the essential social element of the commons."

David Bollier, one of the leading theorists of the commons on the international stage, has defined the term as a social dynamic. "A commons arises whenever a given community decides it wishes to manage a resource in a collective manner, with special regard for equitable access, use and sustainability. It is a social form that has long lived in the shadows of our market culture, and now is on the rise, " he wrote in the British political journal *Renewal*.

Julie Ristau and Alexa Bradley, community organizers with extensive experience, find that many people have internalized the competitive ethos of the market mentality so fully that they believe any cooperative action is doomed to fail. They're losing the ability to even think of working together. Yet at the same time, Ristau and Bradley detect in others "a broad yearning for hope, connection, and restoration. We see a remarkable array of efforts to reconstitute community, [to relocate food](#), to move toward [cooperative economics](#), to better harmonize our lives with the health of our planet. These efforts spring from a deep human need and desire for different ways of interacting and organizing resources that will help us reconstitute our capacity for shared ownership, collaboration, and stewardship."

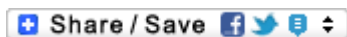
Growing numbers of people are taking steps that move us, gradually, in the direction of a commons-based society—a world in which the fundamental focus on competition that characterizes life today would be balanced with new attitudes and social structures that foster cooperation. This vision is emerging at precisely the point we need it most. Deeply held myths of the last thirty years about the magic of the market have been shattered by the implosion of the global financial bubble, [creating both an opening and an acute need for different ways of living](#).

To deliver us from current economic and ecological calamities will require more than administering a few tweaks to the operating system that runs our society. A complete retooling is needed—a paradigm shift that revises the core principles that guide our culture top to bottom. At this historical moment, the commons vision of a society where "we" matters as much as "me" shines as a beacon of hope for a better world.

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This article was excerpted for [YES! Magazine](#) from [All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons](#) by Jay Walljasper and On the Commons. **Jay Walljasper**, editor of [OnTheCommons.org](#) and author of [The Great Neighborhood Book](#), writes widely about cities, community, sustainability and travel. [On The Commons](#) is a commons movement strategy center.

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[Tom Mullen: Jesus Christ, Libertarian](#)

Jesus Christ, Libertarian

by Tom Mullen [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 25, 2010 | Tom Mullen | LewRockwell

"Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, (and) from now on do not sin anymore." (John 8: 3–11)

As we approach the new year with conservatism again ascendant in the political sphere, this story of Jesus' uncompromising libertarianism seems even more timely than stories of his birth, despite the approach of his celebrated birthday. Nowhere does Jesus admonish "social conservatives" more harshly.

There is an important distinction here. By "social conservative," I do not mean anyone who disapproves of certain human behavior. The freedom to follow the dictates of one's conscience was the first inalienable right recognized by the founders of our nation. If one truly believes that homosexuality, adultery, or other "non-conservative" behavior violates the laws of God, it is that person's inalienable right to disapprove of it, even to voice his disapproval of it, regardless of the anguished cries of the political correctness lobby on the left.

However, no one has a right to use violence against those who engage in behavior that does not harm another person, regardless of whether or not that behavior violates the laws of God. Since all laws are enforced under the threat of violence (as this story also makes wonderfully clear), Jesus makes it clear in this passage that it is not for men to enforce the laws of God. With the exception of cases in which one human being has harmed another, the right to punish the behavior of others is reserved for God.

It is important to recognize that Jesus does not condone the sin that the anonymous woman has committed. When he has shamed away the mob who would have stoned her, Jesus commands her to sin no more. Neither does he insinuate that her behavior might not have consequences for her soul. With flawless libertarian reasoning, Jesus teaches us the true meaning of freedom: that God grants us the liberty to do as we wish, even to reject him and his laws, but that we also bear the full consequences of our actions. If we harm another person, then we are subject to the laws of men. However, it is for each individual to determine the will of God according to his conscience and to choose whether to act accordingly or not. There never has been nor can there ever be any body of corruptible men who can save an individual's soul.

This is by no means the only place in the gospels that Jesus teaches us this lesson. His entire public ministry was one admonishment of the hypocritical, socially conservative theocracy after another. Indeed, it is the Jewish state that is Jesus' chief antagonist throughout the gospels. He is noticeably disinterested in the more secular Roman government, despite its tyranny over his people. While he certainly doesn't approve of the Romans, he has no interest in political revolution. As Jesus tells Pilate, "my kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36). However, his own government does not merely commit secular, political oppression against its people. It usurps the authority of God and attempts to judge in his place. For this, Jesus constantly lets loose his most venomous admonishments.

"The chief priests and Pharisees" are constantly shown up for what they are throughout the gospels. They do not seek to punish sins to defend the honor of God, but for their own selfish political motives. Their persecution and eventual murder of Jesus himself is quite obviously perpetrated out of fear of his influence over the people. And what is this subversive influence that warrants torture and death? "Love one another as I have loved you. Love your enemies. Do unto others as you have them do unto you." Of course the state would hate such a message. It runs afoul of every depravity that the state tries to exhort its citizens to, including its wars, its persecution of non-conformists, and its rampant looting of the citizenry dressed up as "public works."

When Jesus encounters man-made laws masquerading as the laws of God, he openly condones breaking those laws. When his disciples pick fruit on the Sabbath and are caught in the act by the Pharisees, Jesus beats them at their own game by citing Jewish scripture, which describes David actually eating sacred bread out of the temple, reserved for the priests by Jewish law.

Demonstrating how perverse any theocratic state eventually becomes, the Pharisees then bring a man forward with a "withered hand," daring Jesus to cure him and break the law himself. They are willing to see this man miss his one chance to be cured in the hopes that they can use their distorted interpretation of God's command to "keep holy the Sabbath" to ensnare Jesus for political ends. Jesus breaks the law without hesitation, saying that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Caring little for the wisdom of the lesson and interested only in maintaining their own autocratic power, the Pharisees withdraw to begin planning Jesus' murder. (Matthew 12: 1-14)

By attempting to use the law to enforce their morality, social conservatives violate the very principles that they say that they cherish most. Social conservatives decry Islam because it attempts to “propagate the faith by the sword.” However, there is only a cosmetic difference between promoting your religious views through acts of terrorism and doing likewise through passing unjust laws against minorities who have no recourse but to obey or suffer violence. In both cases, it is the sword that compels the victim rather than the mind or the heart. Neither can social conservatives rely on the argument that their laws are passed by an elected body representing the people. If that justifies socially conservative laws, then what is their objection to the welfare state?

No part of this argument should be misconstrued as an endorsement of political correctness or the left’s agenda to grant positive rights to their own special interest groups for political purposes. If we are truly a free country and we meant what we said in the first amendment to our Constitution, then every individual, whether the most fundamentalist Christian or the most libertine atheist, should have the right to speak freely, even if what they say offends another person. For many devout Christians, it is their sacred duty to try to persuade their fellow man to repent of his sins and embrace Jesus as his savior.

However, there is an ocean of difference between persuasion and coercion. The minute that we say, “there ought to be a law,” we are picking up the sword. If we do so in defense of the inalienable human rights of life, liberty, and property, we are within our rightful authority. If we do so to supplant the authority of God, we become the very type of people that Jesus spent his life fighting against. To truly be Christian, we must recognize the need for “a wall of separation between church and state.”

Jesus was very clear about his views on what would lead to salvation and what would not. Jesus condemned many behaviors, like adultery, that social conservatives likewise condemn. He also said that “no one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) However, he does not go on to say, “Therefore, if your brother does not come to me willingly, then draw your sword and force him.” Salvation must be chosen; God did not create a race of slaves.

As we celebrate the birth of this great libertarian, let us not forget the lesson of his life and death. Jesus was murdered by the theocratic state for exposing their hypocrisy and resisting their unjust, blasphemous laws. Let us follow his example of speaking our minds according to our consciences but never raising our hand to save our brothers’ souls. Each one of us will ultimately find that our understanding of the will of God is imperfect, as we are imperfect. Therefore, we must follow Jesus’ example of tolerance and forgiveness, lest we find that we ourselves have mistakenly punished the innocent. Our laws should keep us from harming each other, and leave each person’s soul to the judgment of God.

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Tom Mullen is a writer, musician, and business consultant. In January 2009, he published his first book, [A Return to Common Sense: Reawakening Liberty in the Inhabitants of America](#). Visit his [website](#) and his [blog](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [1:31 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

James Hunter: The Collective Face of Evil

The Collective Face of Evil

By James Hunter [article link](#)

December 26, 2010 | OpEdNews

Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing was ever made. -Immanuel Kant

The great atrocities of history have been condoned and/or committed by communities, most frequently nations, and have been done in the name of "purity," or some other high ideal. Unspeakable physical, cultural, and psychological violence committed against other human beings is predominantly a collective phenomenon. Only a small proportion of the mindless violence of which the human race is guilty is committed by deranged individuals. This is an important point because it is generally assumed that when individuals and society come into conflict, society occupies the high ground. This assumption is even built into our language. When we wish to use a more or less polite term to define someone we think is an evil person we call him "anti-social" or "sociopathic." If our assumption about the moral superiority of society over the individual is untrue, then it will require a serious re-evaluation of some basic assumptions that most of us have. It is a re-thinking that those who stand to benefit from the established order do not want us to undertake.

Does the data available to us support our primary claim here? Getting reliable statistics on important topics is always an iffy thing. If a matter of historical fact is of great significance, then probably someone has an interest in misrepresenting the data. Also when different people collect data they may mean very different things while using the same terms. What is genocide? What is rape? Murder? An atrocity? Torture? Fortunately for our purposes only a rough estimate is necessary. For our measure of "social evil" we will include war, genocide, and obvious examples of destroying the infra-structure of societies, upon which a significant number of people rely simply to sustain life. We will compare this with the most obvious example of death caused by individual violence, which is murder.

On his [web site Matthew White](#) tallies the number of collectively caused deaths in the twentieth century as follows: Genocide and Tyranny: 83,000,000, Military Deaths in War: 42,000,000, Civilian Deaths in War: 19,000,000, and Man-made Famine: 44,000,000, for a total of 188,000,000 unnecessary deaths caused by collective policies during the 20th century. This was lower than estimates by two other researchers on the same topic that he cites. Their estimates were 203,000,000 and 258,327,000. Different ways of counting, different definitions, and perhaps somewhat different political agendas account for the variance. However, it would seem to be a fairly conservative estimate that about 188,000,000 people in the 20th century died from socially created catastrophes, such as wars, genocides and the destruction of social infrastructures. How does this compare with murder?

Basing his estimate on known statistics, and extrapolating from these numbers, White comes up with the figure of 8,500,000 homicides in the 20th century. Granted that this is simply an estimate, his reasoning was plausible, and this probably represents a fairly accurate ball park figure. If we put White's two figures together we have about 8.5 million homicides compared with 196.5 million collectively generated deaths. That means that about 4.3% of these the death total was the result of individuals acting on their own and 95.7% was the result of the internal and external policies of nations. That is rather striking. Surely it should be enough to raise questions about our assumption that when individuals and societies are in conflict, society generally occupies the ethical high ground.

The lion's share of evil in the world is not created by individuals violating the rules of society, but by societies who violate the rights of the individuals that compose them, and who are not willing to accommodate to the legitimate needs of their neighboring societies. Enemies of society, if they are violent and fanatical, may indeed pose a threat to people, and we may need some protection from them. But first and foremost we need protection from society itself. It was this understanding that led to the creation of the Bill of Rights, the Nuremberg Principles, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and similar documents. The danger is especially great when we are dealing with a society that operates under the illusion of its unassailable purity, as is the case with the United States at this time.

It is curious how often one finds the ideal of "purity" behind the actions and ideologies of groups that perpetrate needless violence on others. Examples abound. The war on drugs. Prohibition. Laws against sex workers. The persecution of gays,

lesbians and other sexual minorities. The Holocaust. The Inquisition. The Kumer Rouge. Whether we are talking about physical, sexual, ideological, racial, religious, or ideological purity, the advocacy for and implementation of this ideal is generally a prelude to violence. So much is this the case that whenever we hear the word "purity", or perceive this ideal disguised in the garb of another word, a warning bell should go off in our minds. Is some new carnage being engineered?

How are we to explain this propensity for groups of individuals to do things that most of its members acting as individuals would never do? I am sure that a number of factors come into play, but perhaps we can highlight a few of the most important ones.

Undue Submission to Authority

People suffer from the belief that if an authority tells them to do some the thing that is plainly evil, they are exonerated from the guilt of doing it. They have, in other words, no responsibility for assessing for themselves what is right or wrong in a situation. This fact of human nature was brought home in the famous experiments preformed by Stanley Milgram's in the 1960s. These experiments showed that people would administer what they believed to be painful and possibly fatal electric shocks to people they had no reason to hurt, simply because they were told to do so by an authority. For those not familiar with these experiments an excellent summery of both Milgram's work and some follow up studies can be found [here](#). Minimally they challenge the equation of morality with obedience, as when we consider the terms "good child" and "obedient child" to be synonymous.

The experiments done by Millikan focus on how people respond to experts and/or individuals who have been designated by society to establish and enforce social norms. Mindless conformity to the norms and expectations created by such individuals is certainly one aspect of how society is able to get people to do things that, acting on their own insights and inclinations, they would never do. However, there is a more amorphous type of authority. This is the authority of the group itself. People are afraid of "public opinion." We carry around inside out heads a "generalized other" that expects things of us. "They" will disapprove of us if we are not careful. People want to be accepted by, and thought well of, by their communities. They want to do what is done -- what "they" will approve of. One of the great ironies of history is that the philosopher Heidegger, who warned people about the power of the "they" self, himself became an ardent supported of Hitler. It is easy to be swept along with the crowd. It feels "good." Even philosophers who should know better become seduced. It is difficult to oppose what one's primary social group believes and is doing. It creates anxiety about not being thought well of, about losing the social home to which one belongs, and about the validity of one's own insights. It is difficult indeed.

Eschatological Ideologies

In their collective activities people tend to come under the sway of eschatological ideologies. By "escotological ideologies" I mean to designate ideologies characterized by the following beliefs:

- * The the world can best be understood as a battleground between the forces of good and the forces of evil.
- * That we are moving toward a final battle between these two forces that will lead to an end of history.
- * That during this battle the evil forces will be defeated and the good will enter into a kingdom (either in this world, or in the next) that will establish for all times an unchanging (a-historical) social order based on righteousness and purity.

Christian fundamentalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and the belief system of the Neo-Conservatives all fit this pattern. They are all eschatological ideologies. That is one of the primary reasons why the world is in such a dangerous state at this time.

Most individuals, at least in their personal affairs, are guided by what might be called a value oriented pragmatism. That is to say they pursue those things that they experience as having value, and they do so in a practical manner. This entails the recognition that the needs, beliefs and desires of others must be taken into consideration as they pursue their goals. I am not suggesting that most people are excessively honest or rational in their personal pursuits. They are not. They are mixtures of rational, irrational, self-serving, altruistic and sometimes even noble thoughts and feelings. But they do not organize their

daily interactions with others on the premise that they are themselves paragons of virtue and that anyone who opposes them is an incarnation of pure evil and should be killed. They do not, in other words, understand their personal affairs in terms of an eschatological understanding of reality.

The Influence of the "Super-Elite"

Not all the forces that contribute to the dangerousness of the times are driven by eschatological fantasies. The money elite of the world -- primarily of big bankers and the CEOs of multi-national corporations -- are driven by other aims.

In large part it the super-elite seem to be driven by pure and unadorned greed. However, it is probably true that some of the economic super-elite sincerely believe that it would be best for everybody if the world were ruled by the elite who who presumably proven themselves in the economic arena to be capable of ruling. Three important facts should be noted about the super elite. First, they manipulate for their own ends the belief systems of those who are susceptible to escotological thinking. Second, they see any real form of democracy as contrary to their ends. Whether their motivations are self-seeking or benevolent, they are aristocrats. Third, whatever their motivations, by promoting policies that increase financial gap between the rich and the poor they are creating a very dangerous situation.

Every week I read articles and see videos done by intelligent and sensitive women and men, who have taken the trouble to know what they are talking about, and who make sensible and creative suggestions about how we as species might move forward without destroying either each other or the ecology upon which we are dependent. My thinking and life are vastly enriched by the work of such people. There are lots of them, actually. I think, so long as there are such people around, the human race is not hopeless. In an article entitled [The Fundamental Mistake of Civilized Life](#) I argue that human beings are not intrinsically evil. I believe I am justified in this fundamentally positive take on human nature, despite the evidence that points toward a less optimistic assessment. But then I notice an unfortunate fact. These thoughtful people are not running the world. Many are marginalized. They are not called by the TV news shows, even when they obviously know far more than the experts who are called. These intelligent and informed people are seldom powerful elected officials or appointees, or CEOs in big corporations. They are not members of the political and economic super-elite. This raises an interesting question in my mind. What does it take to rise to the top of the business and political organizations in our society. Of course there are many charming and sensitive, and perhaps even moral people among the super-elite, but it appears to me that rising to the top generally entails a number of characteristic:

- * A fortunate birth which gives the person access to economic and educational resources that most people do not have, and which also pre-disposes them to be identified with the interests of the very rich.
- * A superior degree of intelligence. This is not always the case. With a fortunate birth sometimes a superficial cunning, and an instinct for who one should hang out with may be enough. But on the average, people who rise to the top probably are more intelligent than average.
- * A ruthlessness in playing the highly competitive games that permit success in our political and business institutions. The ability to empathize with others would tend to inhibit the needed ruthlessness and would serve as an impediment.
- * Narcissism, and a drive toward self-aggrandizement.
- * A willingness to embark on enterprises that will inevitably lead to great human suffering and even death. We see this, for example, in the willingness to exploit the cheapest labor that can be found, and to undercut the ability of workers to advocate for health benefits, acceptable working conditions, or even a living wage.
- * A philosophy of social Darwinism that tells the person that since s/he is at the top, s/he must belong there. If the unfit die from malnutrition and preventable diseases, that is just natural selection at work.
- * A willingness to set aside the most fundamental requirements of ethics whenever they might impose a limit on personal ambition.

These characteristics paint the picture of a privileged, cunning, ruthless, narcissistic, amoral individual who is incapable of real empathy or of loyalty in relationships that are not self-serving, and who conducts his or her affairs in a Machiavellian manner. In other words, in the language of the mental health field, a sociopath. If it is individuals with these characteristics that do, on the whole, rise to the top the power hierarchies in business and politics, then there is little wonder that our collective lives are on the whole ethically inferior to the lives we live as individuals.

Unless definite steps are taken to prevent it, a super elite of the very rich and powerful always seems to emerge. These groups may consider themselves to be the philosopher kings that Plato felt should run societies. Minimally one can say that these elites are not strong advocates of real democracy -- though they may like the trappings of a democracy if they can control it with their money. It is possible that some members of the super-elite actually do try to act for the benefit of the whole of society. The super-elite do not represent a totally monolithic entity. In general, however, they do band together to protect their privilege and to further the right of a small minority of people to amass and retain huge fortunes at the expense of the rest. The resulting inequities -- when they reach a degree of absurdity -- invariably produce violence.

Social Distance

The issue of "distance" between people is also a factor. Interactions between individuals are most often face to face, while collective actions tend to be in relationship to people who are more distant from one. David Grossman in his book "[On Killing](#)" makes the point that it is actually very difficult for one human being to kill another one. Soldiers have to be psychologically conditioned to do so. In this context, boot camp can be understood as society training people to be less than fully human, or at least to suppress the innate pro-social inclinations that are built into the species. A good deal of the conditioning in boot camp is focused on teaching the soldiers not to perceive the enemy as people like unto themselves, with family, friends, hopes, fears, worthy aspirations etc. Despite the training, many soldiers find it very difficult to deal with the aftermath of having killed -- even in battle, where it is the socially prescribed thing to do. Physical as well as psychological distance between the killer and the killed facilitates a willingness to kill. One presumes that the same person who could direct a drone plane to bomb a household of people -- with the inevitable "collateral damage" that he/she knows will be a part of the process -- would not kill the children and other non-military people with a knife while looking them in the face. A certain amount of collective violence is possible simply because the perpetrators are spared the horror of seeing what they are doing. Cultural and language differences are additional forms of distancing that facilitate socially prescribed killing. The less "like us" and therefore the less human the other person is perceived to be, the easier it is to kill and/or torture him/her. Perhaps the greatest distance is achieved through the process of demonizing the "enemy." Members of the group to be attacked or exterminated are not human. They are not even ordinary animals, for which one might still feel some sympathy. They are monsters -- devils. We have been taught that society forces individuals to repress violent and destructive impulses for the sake of harmonious social living. Actually what seems more common is for society to repress those impulses that are most tender, gentle, loving and pro-social.

Some Ramifications

We have attempted to suggest some of the reasons why, on the average, collectivities and societies -- especially nations -- are responsible for much more violent and criminal behavior than are individuals. We have touched on eschatological ideologies, the dynamics of authority, the nature of the economic / political super elite, and the role of social distance as some of the factors that might help explain this fact. Undoubtedly there are other factors. Whatever the causes, the recognition that people acting as a part of collectivities do, in fact, tend to be more violent than the same individuals acting of individuals has a number of important ramifications.

Human beings are social creatures. We cannot totally withdraw from participation in the life of our communities, nor would it be good to do so. At the same time, when we evaluate any conflict between society and individuals we should remain open to the possibility that the source of the difficulty may be as much or even more with society than with the individual. The prisoner is not necessarily more guilty than the guard, the judge, the legislature, or the churches that pressed for laws that might be repressive, draconian, misplaced, counterproductive or simply unnecessary. The isolated and eccentric thinker may have exactly the insight that is needed for our survival and evolution.

Authority should always be treated with suspicion. This doesn't mean we don't need authorities, in the sense of people who take the trouble to study this or that aspect of life in detail, so that they can provide us with reliable conclusions. But we should always be aware of any biases that the authorities might have. Are we really getting an objective appraisal, or are we reading a more or less subtle form of propaganda? Is the real aim simply to inform us, or is it to create a particular view of reality that would be conducive to their interests, or to interests that they serve. Perhaps the most conspicuous examples of less than objective reporting on data are supplied by drug companies, who do the research on the effectiveness of their own products. Anyone who thinks they can trust such research is naive indeed. Experts in all fields can be bought by business or political groups that want the information that is delivered to the public to be tailored to create the right impression. Our society is awash in misinformation, half truths, and just plain lies pumped into the mainstream by "experts".

When their own insights are in conflict with what "everybody" knows, individuals should at least entertain the possibility that they may be right and society wrong. Of course it is also possible that society may be right. But the matter should be resolved by reason and evidence, not by deeply ingrained prejudices, urban legends, moral panics and force.

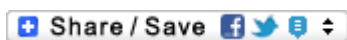
Radically free speech may be the most important of all the liberties to be protected in a free society. Many people believe that freedom is a value in its own right, and I would concur. But perhaps an important pragmatic consideration might also be brought forward in support of free speech. Think about how often it is that what everybody "knew" turned out to not be so. In these dangerous times it might well be fatal for us to disregard the voices of those who march to a different drummer.

While there are notable exceptions, the fact is that most individuals most of the time are capable of only very limited deviations -- whether in thought or action -- from the norms of their reference groups. This is true whether their primary reference group is a nation, a religion, a social class, a political movement, or a criminal organization. If one wishes to understand why people perpetrate so much needless suffering on others, it is of limited value to look into the evil that lurks in the hearts of individuals. Rather, one needs to focus primarily on the collectivities to which individuals belong and examine the manner in which these collectivities create the conditions that facilitate the ongoing carnage.

James Hunter writes for [Politics of Health](#) and works with David Werner on issues of health.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [1:21 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

Friday, December 24, 2010

[Robert C. Koehler: Believe in Violence and Be Saved](#)

Believe in Violence and Be Saved

by Robert C. Koehler [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 23, 2010 | [Common Wonders](#) | [CommonDreams](#)

A dozen years ago, before 9/11, before Bush Jr. or the war on terror, Bill Clinton, then in the midst of impeachment hearings, bombed Iraq over a four-day period. Shortly before this act of national distraction, I read an article in the Chicago Tribune discussing, with the knowing, amoral inanity of the mainstream media, the international implications of the pending action.

For me, the article was immortalized by the following pull-quote from an anonymous Jordanian official, which crystallized the cynicism of geopolitics and the way nation-states function: "Look, nobody here likes Saddam, but people will not be happy when they see Iraqi babies dying on TV."

The article was in no way critical of the quote, which seemed to be delivered up merely for our sophisticated consumption.

The idea, or so it struck me, was to coyly bring readers into the know so they could pretend to weigh, as important officials do, the troublesome public relations components of an act of war before committing murder in the name of national security.

If we oppose war, if we stand in horror at every nuance and detail of it that comes to our attention, if we grow less “knowing” and “sophisticated” as the days pass and the machinery of empire grinds on — if we have experienced war first hand and felt the cruelty of industrialized murder disconnected from its justifications — and if we are driven by this horror, let us say, to stand illegally at the White House fence in protest of it and, like Thoreau, Gandhi, King, submit to arrest for our beliefs, this cynicism is our dilemma.

The 131 people who did so a week ago — members of Veterans for Peace and Code Pink, Daniel Ellsberg, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, former FBI agent Coleen Rowley, journalist Chris Hedges — barely merited news coverage in our sophisticated, dying media, which can purvey knowing cynicism far more easily than they can convey moral outcry. This slows down, coagulates, the dynamic of change.

Today’s supercharged world, the one the media desperately summon for us 24/7, has no spiritual depth. Even so, some 60 percent of Americans, according to a recent ABC/Washington Post poll, are now saying the war in Afghanistan “hasn’t been worth it”; that number has jumped 7 percent since July.

“I’m well aware of the popular concerns and I understand it,” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in response to this ebbing of support, “but I don’t think leaders, and certainly this president, will make decisions that are matters of life and death and the future security of our nation based on polling.”

While her words sound so rational and sensible, this is when I thought about the “dead babies” quote and how the conceit of representative government is that it prevents the passion of the mob from ruling the day. Yet “the mob” is the reservoir of human empathy and the pulsing ocean of our evolution. When it comes to war, “the mob” may be the only voice of restraint and concern for the common good. The “leaders,” isolated in their servitude to the corporate status quo, tempted by the power they command, are the ones who commit acts of inhumanity. Such acts are rational far more often than they are passionate and primal.

“Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward.”

So wrote Henry David Thoreau in his essay “Civil Disobedience,” quoted by [Ray McGovern](#) a few days ago in an article discussing his own act of civil disobedience. Our only hope is the human conscience, individual and ungovernable, yet connected to the core of who we are while the decisions of political leaders — who do not “make decisions . . . of life and death . . . based on polling” — are too often connected only to the interests they represent.

Pondering all this, I also thought about theologian Walter Wink and what he calls the [Myth of Redemptive Violence](#): the simplistic belief in incorruptible good and irredeemable evil, locked in an endless go-around of carnage and collateral damage. This myth, writes Wink, is society’s dominant religion, at least as old as ancient Babylon, as current as the Saturday morning cartoons. It’s the stand-in for wisdom in politics and pop culture — and it’s what the protesters at the White House on Dec. 17, and maybe even the respondents to the recent ABC/Washington Post poll, cried out against.

In the Babylonian myth, Wink explains, the universe was created in a confrontation between gods, an act of primordial violence. Thus our natural condition is war. And human beings, Wink writes, “are thus naturally incapable of peaceful coexistence. Order must continually be imposed upon us from on high: men over women, masters over slaves, priests over laity, aristocrats over peasants, rulers over people.”

This myth imposes a toxic immunity on all who embrace it — an immunity, you might say, to “dead babies” and all else that is harmed in the name of doing good. It has delivered us to our current crossroads. The time has come to transcend it, one conscience at a time.

Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist. His new book, "[Courage Grows Strong at the Wound](#)" (Xenos Press) is now available in bookstores ([Amazon](#)). Contact him at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his website [Common Wonders](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:05 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Thursday, December 23, 2010

[Shamus Cooke: 7 Reasons Why Capitalism Can't Recover Anytime Soon](#)

There are important social, political and economic developments that belie the rosy predictions of politicians.

7 Reasons Why Capitalism Can't Recover Anytime Soon

By Shamus Cooke [article link](#)

December 21, 2010 | AlterNet

As the recession grinds on, politicians in most industrial countries have an incentive to make exaggerated claims about the supposed coming economic recovery. Some say the recession is over. Obama is in the group that claims we're on "the road to recovery," while other nations can only spot recovery "on the horizon." Below are seven important social phenomena that point to a more realistic economic and political outlook.

1) **Central Banks are Dumbfounded.** The usual tricks that U.S. and European central banks use to avoid recessions are long-exhausted. Interest rates cannot get any lower. And because cheap money wasn't working, the printing press was turned up a notch, into what the U.S. federal reserve calls quantitative easing -- injecting hundreds of billions of dollars into the world economy, escalating an emerging trade war.

2) **Trade War.** For a global economy to grow, global cooperation is needed. But in a major recession all countries engage in a bitter struggle to dominate foreign markets so that their own corporations can export. These markets are won by devaluing currencies (accomplished in the U.S. by quantitative easing), installing protectionist measures (so that a nation's corporations have monopoly dominance over the nation's consumers), or by war (a risky but highly effective form of market domination).

3) **Military War.** Foreign war is a good symptom of economic decay. The domination of markets -- every inch of them -- become an issue of life and death importance. Wars have been unleashed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Pakistan. "Containing" economies like China and "opening" economies like Iran and North Korea become more urgent during a major recession, requiring brute force and creating further global instability in all realms of social life.

4) **U.S. Economy at a Standstill.** The most important consumer market in the world, the U.S. is a nation of nearly bankrupt consumers. Nearly thirty million Americans are unemployed or underemployed, while further job losses are certain, due to nearly every state's budget deficit. The New York Times explains:

"Now states are bracing for more painful cuts, more layoffs, more tax increases, more battles with public employee unions, more requests to bail out cities. And in the long term, as cities and states try to keep up on their debts, the very nature of government could change as they have less money left over to pay for the services they have long provided." (12-05-10)

5) **Bailout Capitalism.** First it was the banks and other corporations that needed bailing out, and now whole nations. Western nations bailed out their banks by falling into the massive debt that they are now drowning in. Greece and Ireland

have been bailed out, with eyes shifting to Portugal, Spain, and Italy. The entire European Union is being called into question as the Euro takes a beating in the bailout spree. If the EU is dismantled, the shock waves will quickly reach other economies.

6) Bailout Repercussions. All western nations -- including the U.S. and England -- are grappling with their national debts. Rich bond investors are demanding that these countries drastically reduce their deficits, while also demanding that the deficits be reduced on the backs of working families, instead of rich investors. This is tearing the social fabric apart, as working and poor people see their social programs under attack. In Europe mass movements are erupting in France, Spain, Portugal, England, Greece, Ireland, Italy, etc. Social stability is a prerequisite for a recovered economy, but corporate politicians everywhere are asking much more than working people are willing to give.

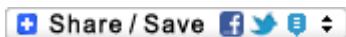
7) The Far Right Emerges. To deal with working people more ruthlessly, the radical right is being unleashed. In normal times these bigots yell furiously but no one listens. But in times of economic crisis they're given endless airtime on all major media outlets. The message of the far right promotes all the rottenness not yet eradicated by education: racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, violence, and a backward nationalism that fears all things "foreign." These core beliefs effectively divide working people so that a concerted campaign against the corporate elite is harder to wage. Meanwhile, labor unions, progressives, and other working class organizations are instead targeted.

The above phenomena do not happen in a normal economic cycle of boom and bust. These symptoms point to a larger disease in the international economic system, a disease that cannot be cured by politicians who swear allegiance to this deteriorating system and to the wealthy elite who benefit from it. To ensure that the economic system is changed so that working people benefit, large-scale collective action is necessary, based on demands that unite the majority of working people: a massive job-creation program at the expense of Wall Street, no cuts to Social Security and Medicare, a moratorium on home foreclosures, passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, and so on. With the unions in the lead promoting these demands, working people could put up a real fight.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for [Workers Action](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:59 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Jack Rasmus: The 'Repo-Demo' Party's Three Phase Austerity Plan for America](#)

Get ready for more of the same failed "job creation" policies, enacted by an increasingly unified political elite.

The 'Repo-Demo' Party's Three Phase Austerity Plan for America

by Jack Rasmus [article ink](#) [article link](#)

December 23, 2010 | In These Times | CommonDreams

The Bush tax cuts are now extended. What cost \$3.4 trillion over the past decade, 80% of which accrued to the wealthiest households and U.S. corporations, will now cost another \$802 billion over the next two years and a projected \$4 trillion over the coming decade.

But the Bush tax cut extension just passed by a political elite increasingly united on economic policy—a 'Repo-Demo' Party dominated by corporate interests—is only the first of three phases in a new policy offensive designed to protect the incomes of the wealthy and corporate America for another decade, to be paid for directly by middle- and working-class America. Together, the three phases represent the emerging U.S. variant of a general austerity strategy, similar in objective but different in content to other austerity programs now emerging as well in the Eurozone, Japan and elsewhere.

President Obama's deal with Republican leaders, signed into law December 17, 2010, extended tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans for another two years.

Phase two: draconian spending cuts

The second phase will likely be implemented in the next three months, before the ceiling on the federal debt has to be lifted. It will take the form of massive spending cuts in the U.S. budget, targeting Social Security and Medicare in particular. (A parallel draconian slash in spending will occur at the state level, targeting Medicaid and education).

Social Security has been a prime target since the Reagan years. Unable to cut it in the early 1980s, Reagan instead settled on a major increase in the payroll tax in 1984, creating a \$2.5 trillion surplus over the last 25 years. However, that surplus was 'borrowed' every year by Congress to cover up in part U.S. budget deficits created annually since the 1980s to pay for war spending and tax cuts.

All that remains of the surplus in the Social Security Trust Fund are government IOUs promising to replace the shortfall when necessary—a replacement we'll never see in our lifetimes.

In 2003, Bush II re-opened the attack on Social Security by trying to privatize it, but failed. Despite the accumulated surplus having been drained, Social Security was still annually producing a surplus and was thus financially too stable to convince the public it needed basic change. In contrast, today, as a result of a chronic three year long recession, there is no longer an annual surplus being created. Social Security is just breaking even.

But implementing the pending payroll tax cuts—part of Phase One—will finally put Social Security in the red, creating for the first time the net annual losses conservatives and corporate America have always needed to push a major gutting of the program. The payroll tax cut is thus the first move in what will prove a general attack on social security that will gain momentum in the coming months. Reagan conservatives have argued it would first be necessary to 'starve the beast' in order to dismantle it. For the first time, that scenario will exist.

Phase three: revising tax code to help the wealthy

Following the imminent draconian cuts in spending and Social Security-Medicare-Medicaid-Education about to take place in 2011, which lie at the heart of the second phase, the third phase of the new austerity strategy will follow in the summer of 2012. It will take the form of a fundamental revision of the U.S. tax code.

As part of this general revision, the Bush tax cuts will likely be made permanent for the rest of the decade to come. In addition, personal income tax brackets for the wealthiest households will be reduced to no more than three, possibly two, with a top rate for the wealthy or no more than 28%, representing a return to Reagan years.

For corporations, depreciation write-offs, a de facto investment tax credit for business, will be accelerated to full deductions in the first year—a measure already just enacted for small business this year. For multinational corporations, the foreign profits tax will be restructured to their advantage. The corporate tax rate will be significantly reduced or even phased out entirely. Not least, the new 2% cut in payroll taxes could also be extended, forcing yet another round of further reductions in Social Security and Medicare benefits and still higher co-pays for retirees.

To pay for the tax code rewrite and even more concessions to wealthy households, investors and corporations, the middle class will pay more. Adjustments to the Alternative Minimum Tax, AMT, for the middle class will be phased out. And the mortgage interest tax credit will be eliminated in stages as well.

Same wine in same bottles, with new label

Obama and the 'Repo Demo' Party have launched a PR offensive in the wake of the Bush tax cut extensions, proclaiming that the Bush tax cuts plus unemployment insurance extension plus payroll tax cut together amount to a 'Stimulus 2' package that will result in more economic growth and new jobs.

This is the same old tired song of the Bush administration. In fact, every one of the four major Bush tax cuts passed between 2001-04 was officially called 'job creation' bills.

The result of these 'job bills' was the weakest job creation following a recession of all the nine prior recessions since 1945. It took 46 months to recover jobs lost from January 2001, the start of Bush's first recession. The second recession of the Bush II era, which started in December 2007, was followed by a \$168 billion stimulus bill passed in spring 2008—about \$90 billion of which was tax cuts. The result: 4.5 million full-time jobs lost in 2008. Then another \$787 billion stimulus in early 2009, Obama's 'Stimulus 1' package—about half of which was tax cuts. The result: Another 6.5 million full time jobs lost in 2009. In 2010, another half million lost jobs and dropped out of the labor market. Of the 900,000 private sector jobs created in 2010, more than two thirds were part-time and temp jobs.

At the close of 2010, now we have yet another tax cut heavy 'Stimulus 2'. Again the claim is that it will create jobs. However, except for the payroll tax cut of \$112 billion there is nothing 'net new' in the so-called 'Stimulus 2.' It's the same old wine poured into same old bottles—just a new label slapped on the side and a brand new cork (payroll tax cut) added to the opening.

The key question: Will any jobs be created?

Corporations are today sitting on a cash hoard of more than \$2 trillion, according to the business press, not investing or creating jobs. Why should increasing that hoard another \$500 billion or so result in anything different? That's the key question conservatives and the 'Repo-Demo' Party elite must answer—but are avoiding. That's the question the media should be asking, but about which they remain conspicuously silent.

Only the \$112 billion payroll tax reduction represents a 'net new' contribution to stimulus. But is it sufficient to generate jobs? Not by a long shot. For those earning \$50,000 a year to the top payroll tax rate of \$106,800 a year, the payroll tax cut will, on average, lead to no more than \$20/week in real spending power after adjustments for partial saving, debt paydowns and what will be accelerating costs for food, healthcare, and gasoline coming in 2011. Those below \$50,000 will actually have less to spend, since the "Make Work Pay" credit is ending for them. That's nowhere nearly sufficient to stimulate the economy and create jobs.

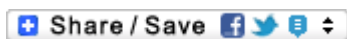
Obama's 2011 'Stimulus 2' will thus prove no more effective than his 2009 'Stimulus 1.' The past decade has produced repeated tax-cut heavy policies targeting the rich and corporations: Bush II and a Republican Congress 2001-06. Bush II and a Democratic Congress 2006-08. Obama and a Democratic Congress 2008-10. And now Obama and a de facto Republican Congress.

The recent Bush tax cut extensions show the corporate-dominated political elite of both parties are now closing ranks as the economic crisis continues with no resolution for all but the wealthy and corporations. The 'Repo-Demo' Party, newly aligned around the same old failed policies, has just begun to do its work. Get ready for more of the same.

Jack Rasmus is the author of [Epic Recession: Prelude to Global Depression](#), published in May 2010 by Pluto Press, Palgrave-Macmillan.

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Wednesday, December 22, 2010

Rebecca Solnit: The Other World Is Here

The Other World Is Here

Iceberg Economies and Shadow Selves: Further Adventures in the Territories of Hope

by Rebecca Solnit [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 22, 2010 | [TomDispatch](#) | [CommonDreams](#) | [Countercurrents](#) | [OpEdNews](#)

After the Macondo well exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, it was easy enough (on your choice of screen) to see a flaming oil platform, the very sea itself set afire with huge plumes of black smoke rising, and the dark smear of what would become five million barrels of oil beginning to soak birds and beaches. Infinitely harder to see and less dramatic was the vast counterforce soon at work: the mobilizing of tens of thousands of volunteers, including passionate locals from fishermen in the Louisiana Oystermen's Association to an outraged tattoo-artist-turned-organizer, from visiting scientists, activist groups, and Catholic Charities reaching out to Vietnamese fishing families to the journalist and oil-policy expert Antonia Juhasz, and Rosina Philippe of the Atakapa-Ishak tribe in Grand Bayou. And don't forget the ceaseless toil of the Sierra Club's local environmental justice organizer, the Gulf Coast Restoration Network, the New Orleans-born [poet-turned-investigator](#) Abe Louise Young, and so many [more](#) than I can list here.

I think of one ornithologist [I met](#) in Grand Bayou who had been dispatched to the Gulf by an organization, but had decided to stay on even if his funding ran out. This mild-mannered man with a giant pair of binoculars seemed to have some form of pneumonia, possibly induced by oil-fume inhalation, but that didn't stop him. He was among the thousands whose purpose in the Gulf had nothing to do with profit, unless you're talking about profiting the planet.

The force he represented mattered there, as it does everywhere -- a force that has become ever more visible to me as I live and journey among those who dedicate themselves to their ideals and act on their solidarities. Only now, though, am I really beginning to understand the full scope of its power.

Long ago, Adam Smith wrote about the "invisible hand" of the free market, a phrase which always brings to my mind horror movies and Gothic novels in which detached and phantasmagorical limbs go about their work crawling and clawing away. The idea was that the economy would somehow self-regulate and so didn't need to be interfered with further -- or so still go the justifications for capitalism, even though it took an enormous armature of government interventions to create the current mix of wealth and poverty in our world. Your tax dollars pay for wars that make the world safe for giant oil corporations, and those corporations hand over huge sums of money to their favorite politicians (and they have so many favorites!) to regulate the political system to continue to protect, reward, and enrich themselves. But you know that story well.

As 2010 ends, what really interests me aren't the corrosions and failures of this system, but the way another system, another invisible hand, is always at work in what you could think of as the great, ongoing, Manichean arm-wrestling match that keeps our planet spinning. The invisible claw of the market may fail to comprehend how powerful the other hand -- the one that gives rather than takes -- is, but neither does that open hand know itself or its own power. It should. We all should.

The Iceberg Economy

Who wouldn't agree that our society is capitalistic, based on competition and selfishness? As it happens, however, huge areas of our lives are also based on gift economies, barter, mutual aid, and giving without hope of return (principles that have little or nothing to do with competition, selfishness, or scarcity economics). Think of the relations between friends, between family members, the activities of volunteers or those who have chosen their vocation on principle rather than for profit.

Think of the acts of those -- from daycare worker to nursing home aide or the editor of [TomDispatch.com](#) -- who do more, and do it more passionately, than they are paid to do; think of the armies of the unpaid who are at "work" counterbalancing and cleaning up after the invisible hand and making every effort to loosen its grip on our collective throat. Such acts represent the relations of the great majority of us some of the time and a minority of us all the time. They are, as the two feminist economists who [published together](#) as J. K. Gibson-Graham noted, the nine-tenths of the economic iceberg that is below the waterline.

Capitalism is only kept going by this army of anti-capitalists, who constantly exert their powers to clean up after it, and at least partially compensate for its destructiveness. Behind the system we all know, in other words, is a shadow system of kindness, the other invisible hand. Much of its work now lies in simply undoing the depredations of the official system. Its achievements are often hard to see or grasp. How can you add up the foreclosures and evictions that don't happen, the forests that aren't leveled, the species that don't go extinct, the discriminations that don't occur?

The official economic arrangements and the laws that enforce them ensure that hungry and homeless people will be plentiful amid plenty. The shadow system provides soup kitchens, food pantries, and giveaways, takes in the unemployed, evicted, and foreclosed upon, defends the indigent, tutors the poorly schooled, comforts the neglected, provides loans, gifts, donations, and a thousand other forms of practical solidarity, as well as emotional support. In the meantime, others seek to reform or transform the system from the inside and out, and in this way, inch by inch, inroads have been made on many fronts over the past half century.

The terrible things done, often in our name and thanks in part to the complicity of our silence or ignorance, matter. They are what wells up daily in the news and attracts our attention. In estimating the true make-up of the world, however, gauging the depth and breadth of this other force is no less important. What actually sustains life is far closer to home and more essential, even if deeper in the shadows, than market forces and much more interesting than selfishness.

Most of the real work on this planet is not done for profit: it's done at home, for each other, for affection, out of idealism, and it starts with the heroic effort to sustain each helpless human being for all those years before fending for yourself becomes feasible. Years ago, when my friends started having babies I finally began to grasp just what kind of labor goes into sustaining one baby from birth just to toddlerhood.

If you do the math, with nearly seven billion of us on Earth right now, that means seven billion years of near-constant tending only to get children upright and walking, a labor of love that adds up to more than the age of this planet. That's not a small force, even if it is only a force of maintenance. Still, the same fierce affection and determination pushes back everywhere at the forces of destruction.

Though I'm not sure I could bring myself to watch yet again that Christmas (and banking) classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, its premise -- that the effects of what we do might best be gauged by considering what the world would be like without us -- is still useful. For the American environment, this last year was, at best, a mixed one. Nonetheless, polar bears [got some protection](#) and the building of at least one nuclear power plant was prevented; the work of groups like the Sierra Club continued to keep new coal-fired power plants at bay; and Californians [defeated](#) a [sinister oil-company-sponsored initiative](#), to name just a few of the more positive developments. Erase all the groups at work on the environment, hardly noticed by the rest of us, and it would have been a massacre.

The Alternatives to "There Is No Alternative"

We not only have a largely capitalist economy but an ideological system that justifies this as inevitable. "There is no alternative," as former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher used to like to say. Many still argue that this is simply the best human nature, nasty to the core, can possibly hope to manage.

Fortunately, it's not true. Not only is there an alternative, but it's here and always has been. Recently, I had dinner with Renato Redentor Constantino, a climate and social justice activist from the Philippines, and he mentioned that he never cared for the slogan, "Another world is possible." That other world is not just possible, he pointed out, it's always been here.

We tend to think revolution has to mean a big in-the-streets, winner-take-all battle that culminates with regime change, but in the past half century it has far more often involved a trillion tiny acts of resistance that sometimes cumulatively change a society so much that the laws have no choice but to follow after. Certainly, American society has changed profoundly over the past half century for those among us who are not male, or straight, or white, or Christian, becoming far less discriminatory and exclusionary.

Radicals often speak as though we live in a bleak landscape in which the good has yet to be born, the revolution yet to begin. As Constantino points out, both of them are here, right now, and they always have been. They are represented in countless acts of solidarity and resistance, and sometimes they even triumph. When they don't -- and that's often enough -- they still do a great deal to counterbalance the official organization of our country and economy. That organization ensures oil spills, while the revolutionaries, if you want to call them that, head for the birds and the beaches, and maybe, while they're at it, change the official order a little, too.

Of course, nothing's quite as simple as that. After all, there are saints in government and monsters in the progressive movement; there's petroleum in my gas tank and money in my name in banks. To suggest that the world is so easily divided into one hand and the other, selfish and altruistic, is impossibly reductive, but talking in binaries has an advantage: it lets you focus on what is seldom acknowledged.

To say there is no alternative dismisses both the desire for and the possibility of alternative arrangements of power. For example, how do you square a Republican Party hell-bent on preserving tax cuts for the wealthiest 2% of Americans with [a new poll](#) by two university economists suggesting that nearly all of us want something quite different? The pollsters showed a cross-section of Americans pie charts depicting three degrees of wealth distribution in three societies, and asked them what their ideal distribution of wealth might be. The unidentified charts ranged from our colossal disparity to absolute equality, with Swedish moderation in-between.

Most chose Sweden as the closest to their ideal. According to the pollsters, the choice suggested that "Americans prefer some inequality to perfect equality, but not to the degree currently present in the United States."

It might help to remember how close we had come to Sweden by the late 1970s, when income disparity was at its low ebb and the Reagan revolution was yet to launch. Of course, these days we in the U.S. aren't offered Swedish wealth distribution, since the system set up to represent us actually spends much of its time representing self-interest and moneyed interests instead. The Republicans are [now being offered](#) even larger bribes than the Democrats to vote in the interests of the ultra-affluent, whether corporate or individual. Both parties, however, helped produce the Supreme Court that, in January, [gave](#) corporations and the wealthy unprecedented power in our political system, power that it will take all our energy to counteract and maybe, someday, force into retreat.

By the way, in searching for that Thatcher no-alternative quote, I found myself on a page at Wikipedia that included the following fundraising plea from a Russian woman scientist: "Almost every day I come home from work and spend several hours improving Wikipedia! Why would I donate so much of my free time? Because I believe that by giving my time and effort -- along with thousands of other people of different nationalities, religion, ages -- we will one day have shared and free knowledge for all people."

Imperfect as it may be, ad-free, nonprofit Wikipedia's sheer scope --3.5 million entries in English alone, to say nothing of smaller Norwegian, Vietnamese, Persian, and Waray-Waray versions with more than 100,000 articles each -- is an astonishing testimony to a human urge to work without recompense when the cause matters.

Butterfly Spotting

The novelist and avid lepidopterist Vladimir Nabokov once asked someone coming down a trail in the Rockies whether he'd seen any butterflies. The answer was negative; there were no butterflies. Nabokov, of course, went up that same trail and saw butterflies galore.

You see what you're looking for. Most of us are constantly urged to see the world as, at best, a competitive place and, at worst, a constant war of each against each, and you can see just that without even bothering to look too hard. But that's not all you can see.

Writing my recent book about disasters, [A Paradise Built in Hell](#), led me to look at the extraordinary way people behave when faced with catastrophes and crises. From news coverage to Hollywood movies, the media suggest that, in these moments of turbulence when institutions often cease to function, we revert to our original nature in a Hobbesian wilderness where people fend for themselves.

Here's the surprise though: in such situations, most of us fend for each other most of the time -- and beautifully at that. Perhaps this, rather than (human) nature red in tooth and claw, is our original nature. At least, the evidence is clear that people not only behave well, but take deep pleasure in doing so, a pleasure so intense it suggests that an unspoken, unmet appetite for meaningful work and vibrant solidarities lives powerfully within us. Those appetites can be found reflected almost nowhere in the mainstream media, and we are normally told that the world in which such appetites might be satisfied is "utopian," impossible to reach because of our savage competitiveness, and so should be left to the most hopeless of dreamers.

Even reports meant to be sympathetic to the possibility that another better world could exist in us right now accept our Social-Darwinian essence as a given. Consider a November *New York Times* piece [on empathy and bullying](#) in which David Bornstein wrote, "We know that humans are hardwired to be aggressive and selfish. But a growing body of research is

demonstrating that there is also a biological basis for human compassion. Brain scans reveal that when we contemplate violence done to others we activate the same regions in our brains that fire up when mothers gaze at their children, suggesting that caring for strangers may be instinctual. When we help others, areas of the brain associated with pleasure also light up. Research by Felix Warneken and Michael Tomasello indicates that toddlers as young as 18 months behave altruistically."

Are we really hardwired to be aggressive and selfish, as Bornstein says at the outset? Are you? No evidence for such a statement need be given, even in an essay that provides plenty of evidence to the contrary, as it's supposed to be a fact universally acknowledged, rather than an opinion.

The Compassion Boom

If I were to use the normal language of the marketplace right now, I'd say that compassion and altruism are hot. It might, however, be more useful to say that the question of the nature of human nature is being reconsidered at the moment by scientists, economists, and social theorists in all sorts of curious combinations and coalitions. Take, for example, the University of California's [Greater Good Science Center](#), which describes itself as studying "the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society." Founding director Dacher Keltner writes, "Recent studies of compassion argue persuasively for a different take on human nature, one that rejects the preeminence of self-interest."

A few dozen miles away is [Stanford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education](#), which likewise draws on researchers in disciplines ranging from neuroscience to Buddhist ethics. Bornstein's essay mentions another organization, [Roots of Empathy](#) in Toronto, that reduces violence and increases empathy among children. Experiments, programs, and activities like this proliferate.

Independent scholars and writers are looking at the same underlying question, and stories in the news this year -- such as those on school bullying -- address questions of how our society gets organized, and for whose benefit. The [suicides](#) of several queer young people generated a groundswell of anti-bullying organizing and soul-searching, notably the largely online ["It Gets Better"](#) attempt to reach out to queer youth.

In a very different arena, neoliberalism -- the economic system that lets the invisible hand throttle what it might -- has finally come into question in the mainstream (whereas if you questioned it in 1999, you were a troglodyte and a flat-Earther). Hillary Clinton lied her way through the 2008 primary, claiming she never supported NAFTA, and her husband, who brought it to us, [publicly apologized](#) for the way his policies eliminated Haiti's rice tariffs. "It was a mistake," Bill Clinton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 10th. "I had to live everyday with the consequences of the loss of capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people because of what I did."

Think of those doing the research on altruism and compassion as a radical scholarly movement, one that could undermine the philosophical and political assumptions behind our current economic system, which is also our political system. These individuals and organizations are putting together the proof that not only is another world possible, but it's been here all along, as visible, should we care to look, as Nabokov's butterflies.

Do not underestimate the power of this force. The world could be much better if more of us were more active on behalf of what we believe in and love; it would be much worse if countless activists weren't already at work from Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma and the climate activists in Tuvalu to the homeless activists around the corner from me. When I studied disasters past, what amazed me was not just that people behaved so beautifully, but that, in doing so, they found such joy. It seems that something in their natures, starved in ordinary times, was fed by the opportunity, under the worst of conditions, to be generous, brave, idealistic, and connected; and when this appetite was fulfilled, the joy shone out, even amid the ruins.

Don't think of this as simply a description of my hopes for 2011, but of what was going on right under our noses in 2010; it's a force we would do well to name, recognize, celebrate, and enlarge upon now. It is who we are, if only we knew it.

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Rebecca Solnit hangs out with climate-change activists, homeless advocates, booksellers, civil libertarians, anti-war veterans, moms, urbanists, Zen monks, and investigative journalists and she sure didn't write this piece for the money. She is the author of 13 books, including last year's [A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster](#), and this year's [Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas](#).

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Wednesday, December 22, 2010

[David Swanson: 2011 Year of Resistance](#)

2011: Year of Resistance

By David Swanson [article link](#)

December 22, 2010 | OpEdNews

You say protests are outmoded because the corporate media ignores them (unless they're corporate sponsored). I say the corporate media is outmoded because it ignores protests.

The coming year is going to see intense resistance to the plutopentagonocracy from volunteer representatives of that majority of Americans that opposes its agenda. We are not going to ask for the media cartel's approval or permission. We are going to continue developing our own communications systems, which are already working well.

If we abandon the work of protest and resistance, those acts will soon be criminalized. If we abandon the work of self-communication we will each come to believe that the rest of us support that criminalization. There is another way.

William T. Hathaway's new book "Radical Peace: People Refusing War," tells true stories of people helping U.S. soldiers to desert and hide, chasing military recruiters out of schools, educating young people as counter-recruitment, caring for veterans, vandalizing recruiting stations, and burning unguarded tanks and airplanes. Many people will like some of these stories and not others. Personally I thought the Afterword was dumb enough to almost ruin an otherwise remarkable and wonderful book. The point is that these are stories that it is up to us to tell each other.

As I travel the country on a book tour I hear in about equal parts from people doing extraordinary things that nobody knows about and from people complaining that nobody is doing anything. We do not have an activism shortage so much as a communications shortage. People are engaged in civil resistance to the government, the banks, and the war machine in great numbers and with stunning creativity.

Since top aggressive war and torture lawyer Jay Bybee became a judge on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which meets up and down the West Coast, he has sat in court few if any times without my friend Susan Harman in the room to protest him. She has become friends with the other judges who are increasingly aware that something must be done.

Were you aware of this? Did you know that students were being arrested for demanding living wages for university employees? Did you know veterans were being arrested at the White House for asking for peace? Did you know that foreclosure victims and journalists alike, when testifying in congressional hearings, were beginning to reprimand Congress?

Did you know neighborhoods were preventing evictions? Did you know school districts were preventing the military testing of students? Did you know that most Americans in the corporate media's own polls favor policies depicted by that media as crazy and unpopular, things like peace, taxation of billionaires, green energy, public education and healthcare, and cuts to the military

By understanding how many of us there are and how many are actively engaged, it can become easier to get involved or to remain involved, and to discover approaches that work for you -- and work for the rest of us. Here's a hint: taking a gun to a school board meeting doesn't fix anything. Shutting Congress down by blocking off its buildings with a human wall could. Our enemies are violence and silence. In 2006, according to then president George W. Bush's new book, the Republican minority leader of the Senate Mitch McConnell asked him to pull troops out of Iraq. We were that close, and nobody told us. They never tell us. They have yet to announce our ongoing success in preventing larger wars and in preventing the bombing of Iran. They never will. We have to make our own announcements.

But 2006 was the last moment in which Democratic-Party loyalists fully supported peace. Our task, therefore, is to develop activism and communication independent of political parties -- just as the other side does with its corporate front groups, tea parties, and Fox News; they support Republicans only when Republicans support fascism. One effort to build a counterforce to the Tea Party is called the Job Party: <http://jobparty.org>.

But we need an alternative not only to Fox News but also to the rest of the corporate media. This is the easiest and most important project anyone can work on. The dream of persuading the labor movement (which can't even strongly oppose corporate trade agreements when the president is a Democrat) to invest in a new television network should be abandoned. If the George Soros's of the world haven't figured out that there's a communications problem, they never will. But we already have what we need; we just need to make it bigger, and we can do so. We should invest in TheRealNews.com, Thom Hartmann, Free Speech TV, Link TV, GRIT TV, Democracy Now, Pacifica Radio, community radio stations, blogs and websites. We should make use of foreign outlets that, for their own reasons, are willing to provide decent coverage of US politics: Al Jazeera, ATN, RT-America, etc. Unsubscribe from the New York Times, stop contributing to any purchasing of ads in it, stop reading it, and read the Guardian online instead. Get connected online, and people will send you the occasional good article or video that all lousy outlets produce. Share that one further, but promote a good website that's hosting it, not the corporate source.

Above all, we must become the media we wish to see in the world. If you take action for peace or justice and do not make that news available online, you have largely failed. If you cannot make it available online, you can Email it to me at david at davidswanson dot org and I will post it at <http://warisacrime.org>.

It's all well and good to stand up in book events and ask everyone to stop paying their taxes, as happens at nearly every event I speak at. But unless you communicate that people are doing that and why, the impact will not be felt. You can withhold the 50% of your taxes that goes to war, but the government will simply defund schools and housing. We have to set aside fears of egotism, fears of spelling things wrong (that never stops the tea party), or whatever other factors cause people to do the work we all need done and then hide it away.

Are you angry enough to put something hard and metal in your hand and go after your congress member? Make it a video camera. Stalk them with it. Sit in their office and refuse to leave until they stop funding Wall Street and wars. Make a movie of what happens and POST IT ONLINE. There is probably enough video footage currently aging in people cameras to save our republic, giving new meaning to the term camera obscura.

On January 11, Witness Against Torture will begin its protests of the policies symbolized by Guantanamo, which turns 10 that day. Come to Washington, D.C., or join in wherever you are.
<http://www.witnesstorture.org>

On January 15, Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, the peace movement will mark 20 years of U.S. war on Iraq. Come to Washington, D.C., or join in wherever you are.
<http://warisacrime.org/20years>

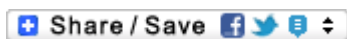
January 17 is both the official Martin Luther King Day and the 50th anniversary of President Eisenhower's speech warning of the military industrial complex. Events are being planned.

January 21 marks one year since the Supreme Court's "Citizens United" ruling handing corporations the power to spend unlimited funds on elections. Events are being planned.

To make this a year of growing resistance, we'll need to start it right. Every advance, from the ending of slavery to the establishment of women's rights, has looked absolutely hopeless until shortly before it was achieved. In fact, it has looked to most people INCOMPREHENSIBLE until shortly before it was achieved. While we no longer talk of good or bad slavery and good or bad rape, we still talk about good or bad wars. That will continue until we resist it sufficiently. There's no telling whether the amount of resistance still needed is large or small, but that it is both our moral responsibility and much more enjoyable than sitting home and grumbling is beyond dispute.

David Swanson is the author of "[War Is A Lie](#)" and "[Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union](#)." He blogs at [Let's Try Democracy](#) and [War Is A Crime](#).

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Adam Parsons: The Rise of 'British' People Power

The Rise of 'British' People Power

by Adam Parsons [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 22, 2010 | Share the World's Resources (STWR) | CommonDreams

This weekend in central London, amidst the falling snow and crowds of Christmas shoppers, British protesters carried out their biggest day of mass action this year - the targeting of major high street retailers to highlight the issue of corporate tax dodging.

On the surface, the cause of the protests might seem nothing new; campaign groups have long [pointed out](#) how Britain loses an estimated £100 billion a year to tax dodging by multinational corporations, money that could double funding for the ailing National Health Service and finance poverty reduction programmes throughout the developing world.

Many non-governmental organisations, such as the Tax Justice Network, have dedicated years of high-level research and advocacy work to the important field of tax and regulation, [boldly declaring](#) on their website homepage that "tax havens cause poverty" - a cause that is seldom discussed around most kitchen tables and widely ignored by most governments.

Yet on Saturday, hundreds of protesters braved the freezing weather and carried out [55 separate protests](#) up and down the country in the name of corporate tax evasion, closing down several high street stores on the busiest shopping day of the year. For a British public renowned for its stiff upper lip and middle class respectability, there is no real precedent for hundreds of people storming through the commercial maelstrom of Oxford Street - without prior permission from police authorities, as in the usual city demonstrations - and chanting such slogans as "Pay Your Tax!", or "Where Did All The Money Go? He Sent It Off To Monaco!". In Brighton, some activists even [glued themselves](#) onto store windows as a way of stopping trading.

Contrary to what the establishment Daily Telegraph newspaper [reported](#), the main victims of the protests were not the people trying to buy Christmas presents for their loved ones. As Jeremy Wight reported in [Red Pepper](#), most shoppers weren't at all annoyed with the tax protesters - in fact, many of them joined in the sit-down demonstrations and showed "a spontaneous outpouring of solidarity", even ordinary 'shoppers' who had known nothing about the cause.

The obvious reason for this drastic change in public sentiment is the harsh austerity measures currently being pushed through by the UK coalition government. As expressed by [UK Uncut](#), the umbrella group that has organised the nationwide protests which first began on December 4th; "If you're angry that the government is cutting services for the poorest and most vulnerable whilst letting the rich avoid billions in tax, then please join us, even if you have never been on a protest

before." Tax justice is back on the agenda because people can clearly see the link with 'austerity', now that the government's rhetoric on public sector cuts is being exposed as a confidence scam.

"We will not accept a cabinet of millionaires cutting services for the poorest and most vulnerable", says a [press release](#) by UK Uncut.

And clearly the public now 'get' the tragic irony of Sir Philip Green, the billionaire owner of the high street fashion empire Arcadia, avoiding paying £285 million in taxes to the public purse whilst advising the government on austerity measures and cuts within the civil service.

An emerging spirit of protest

But it could be that the UK tax protests have a far wider significance, and not only for British politics. Many [commentators](#) are already calling them the most valuable protests in Britain for years - a cause that could force the government to reign in the tax avoidance strategies of the super-rich, and lead to fewer public sector cuts and a more equal country. The energy that is galvanising the public on Britain's high streets is the same energy that mobilised the previously inert student population to suddenly erupt in protest, almost overnight in November, against the market-driven privatisation strategy for [university education](#).

If the government wants to bring the market into education, say the student protestors, then we'll "bring education into the market".

So the same students occupying universities in protest against tuition fee hikes are organising outside Topshop and Vodafone, tied together with orange rope to symbolise the bondage of student debt, and [educating the public](#) about the impact of tax avoidance on public spending. According to openDemocracy founder Anthony Barnett who attended Saturday's protest on Oxford Street; "This is where UK Uncut links to the student protests which were never just about fees but against the imposition of a world without choice - except for what was on calculated offer from a financial system that is patently unjust and probably failing." Under such a wide and inclusive banner, it was not out of place for a group of men dressed as Santa - under the name [Santa's Against Excessive Consumption](#) - to join the protests, sing witty carol songs, and promote the message: "Santa's Home Is Melting: Christmas Consumption Causes Climate Change".

In the space of a few weeks, student riots have evolved into [nationwide movement](#) characterised by intelligent, humorous and peaceful direct actions - from flashmobs and pamphleteers to slogan chanters and sit-down protesters - now mobilised via Twitter and Facebook and communicated across the globe. "After the long, drowsy years of apathy and inaction", says the author [Dan Hind](#), "debt and celebrity-worship are over. In Britain, as elsewhere, the public is back."

The question that remains is not only how this new movement will continue to evolve in Britain, but whether it can connect with the popular protests in other countries through its fundamental call for equality and justice. As 2010 draws to a close, there is reason everywhere for much apathy and pessimism about the new year ahead - the continued wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the shift to the right by many national governments, a worsening financial climate leading to further job losses, the ongoing failure of global negotiations on climate change, the privatisation of public services and austerity measures in many countries, and the prospect of increasing poverty and inequality in both the Global North and South.

But at the same time, a cause for hope and optimism can be found in the changing form of anti-austerity protests across Europe.

Eventually, the emerging spirit of protest in the United Kingdom must recognise the possibility of a united global public voice - one based on an inclusive and unified demand for governments to reorder their distorted priorities. Such a possibility of concerted international action for justice is no longer a pipe dream, as the web-based political movement [Avaaz](#) has been demonstrating for the past four years. Perhaps the sudden creation of a British protest movement at the end of 2010, based on a peaceful form of solidarity that is far more powerful than any call for revolution, is the latest indication of a worldwide public opinion in the making. Let's hope so.

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Tuesday, December 21, 2010

[Jay Walljasper: Reviving the Commons](#)

The good life means more than private property -- all of us have a stake in what we share together.

Vision: Reviving the Commons - A Recipe for Political Optimism

by Jay Walljasper [article link](#)

December 20, 2010 | AlterNet

These are uneasy times for anyone who believes that "liberty and justice for all" still has meaning in modern America.

Triumphant Tea Partiers don their work gloves in anticipation of dismantling three generations of hard-won social progress on Capitol Hill and in the nation's statehouses. The drumbeat throughout the media is that we have been recklessly profligate in social spending, and simply cannot afford to help the poor, heal the environment or invest in anything besides the Pentagon.

Progressives are understandably dazed. Some seem willing to trim back their values in the name of pragmatism. Others hesitate, but wonder how to express a message about our country's future that resonates with everyday Americans.

Although political optimism appears hard to come by right now, I have found plenty of it in the course of writing and editing a new book [All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons](#) in collaboration with the commons movement strategy center [On The Commons](#).

The commons -- which means what we share together and how we share it, encompassing everything from water to the Internet to your neighborhood -- is generating excitement among otherwise beleaguered activists. It offers a compelling new way to tackle familiar problems like economic inequity, environmental devastation and social alienation.

When seen through the lens of the commons, public services cannot be dismissed as "waste" nor basic matters of fairness reduced to "entitlements." And it becomes clear the market is not the ideal framework to govern every aspect of human activity. The commons offers a fresh approach for understanding the most appropriate roles for government, civil society and the market in the complicated mechanism of today's society.

Practical initiatives based on the principles of the commons hold promise for inspiring citizens (a/k/a commoners) to re-engage in social action as they seek common-sense solutions and opportunities. Even in fallow political times like these when we can't expect much positive out of Washington, D.C., the emerging emphasis on what belongs to all of us can spark powerful projects at the grassroots level.

Here's just a sampling of examples from *All That We Share* that point to a better future we have in common. The good life means more than private property -- all of us have a stake in what we share together.

* Robert F. Kennedy Jr. describes how working-class families living along the Hudson in upstate New York, angry about pollution, banded together to enforce a forgotten law that allowed them to save the river.

* A Guatemalan immigrant living in the rural Midwest launched a sustainable-chicken co-op that has turned out to be a [win-win-win](#) for his small town: boosting Latino families' income, providing affordable healthy local food for local folks and easing tensions over immigration.

* Internet enthusiasts realize the worldwide web itself is a commons, and have championed new visions of sharing both on- and off-line.

* Leading water activist [Maude Barlow](#) shows how communities around the world have embraced the commons as a tool to protect their water supply from being taken over by foreign corporations. She is now part of a joint Canadian-U.S. effort to declare the Great Lakes a commons.

* Entrepreneur Peter Barnes took the commons as his model for climate change policies that would reduce carbon at the same time as protecting low- and middle-income people from huge spikes in energy prices. It has now been introduced in both houses of Congress.

* Winona LaDuke notes how indigenous people across the globe always lived according to the principles of the commons.

* The commons thrives even in dark-red states. Alaska taxes oil revenues, which are then shared equally by the state's citizens. Texas taxes off-shore oil revenues, which is devoted to public education. North Dakota operates a state-owned bank, which confers many benefits to citizens.

Jay Walljasper, editor of the [OnTheCommons.org](#), is the author of [The Great Neighborhood Book](#) and the former editor of [Utne Reader](#).

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Yes, There Is An Alternative

by Robin Broad & John Cavanagh [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 21, 2010 | Yes! Magazine | Countercurrents

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Countercurrents [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:39 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Our Rightful Inheritance

Winter Solstice: The Conception of Christ

Winter Solstice: Mary impregnated by the Holy Spirit most likely at this time, Christ was "conceived" at the time of the winter solstice when the night and darkness are longest; Christ is the "light" of the world; His birth was at the time of the fall Feasts of Trumpets/Tabernacles (His Ministry began at this time on His 30th Birthday AD27). Dec 21 is the day of the conception of the Family of God.

In and through community [the Kingdom of God] lies the salvation of the world. We must learn the basic principles of community in our own individual lives and personal spheres of influence. Spiritual healing is a process of becoming whole or holy, conversion is an ongoing process of becoming *increasingly conscious*. We have to awaken to the awareness of how *dead we have become* to fit into the "reality" of this world, this SAGE construct. We must be reminded that the hope of the Gospel cannot be fully eradicated by the repressive present. Breakthrough moments of love remind us that a society based on materialism and narcissistic self-interest is not our only possibility !! It is now time for resurrection [of a like figure; type], for waking the dead consciousness within us and slowly and reassuringly bringing it back to life, reconnecting to the fullness of our possibilities as beings created in the image of the divine. We must be reminded that we are really not alone at all, and that the real task is to recognize each other, see through our various masks, and have confidence that there is enough love, that we are enough, and that *together*, in relationship, we can go for our highest visions again. [based partially on Tikkun and Shared Vision magazines]

Our Rightful Inheritance

God and His Church is not [imposed] containment; God is openness to others [freedom, communion, relationship], strength, *equitable roles*, a *full sharing* of what God has shared with us, a sharing of God's presence and His [blessings] gifts, including healing -- a fear of intrusion does not, and should not, intrude upon God's welcome [the fear should not exist, overriding the Spirit; the result is actualization of intrusion in the guise of protection (by those who assume power) for/against those called (the Elect), and God's guests (those being led); it leads to self-fulfillment; a barrier even against God; reined in, curbed] -- the WAY, the 10C, the signs of God are *life-signs* [indications of true life; liberty]; if God is withheld, the body will wither and die -- we are warned in the Bible to beware, to give heed, to keep watch against vain deceit, and even to mark and avoid the teachings of certain people who insist on creating division, but there is nowhere a command for total exclusion of any within God's community -- total exclusion applies to the world's systemic; God's warriors seek that from which others flee, there is NO fear of anything [God is with us]; we confront society -- the politics of exclusion within the Christian community is of man NOT God !! - it is CONTENTION against God's community; the truth of God must overwhelm the falsehoods !!

"... by His stripes are ye healed," God has promised to heal us of our iniquities, our spiritual sins, as well as, our physical sins - illness of spirit and body were healed by Christ's sacrifice, the penalty has been borne and paid - Christ was beaten, whipped, His flesh torn away [fig. His pound of flesh] by the system - a right way of life will restore us, *heal* us, a way of righteousness, equity - we must claim our rightful inheritance with *all* its benefits !! -- suffering is pain coupled with despair, hopelessness - pain [physical; psychological] takes on an alter-ego, a separate personality that determines what we do, that impacts our lives; chronic pain is almost a third person, a possession, a being possessed - we must allow God to change the circumstances through faith and the application of knowledge [wisdom; the power of God] in the physical and spiritual - God will get to the cause(s), the root of the problem and will exorcise it !! - the incapacity caused by the pain, the suffering, gives way to a new capacity [the ability to contain, absorb, or receive and hold; ability; power; qualification] from God; the *quality of being*, the capability, the potentiality of God's Family opens to us, as God's *gift* !!

It is God's *presence* that brings the healing, our relationship with Him; the absence of God, by our choice, allows the deterioration [our daily lives, the application of God's word, the social Gospel] !! -- the world, the pride of life, is worshipping Satan [he has the world and its glory to give]; living within the false, the world's ways, is NOT worshipping God in truth !! -- SIN involves man's *relationship* to his Maker -- worship is the acknowledging of God in *all* His ways IN *all* our ways, we become one with God [*one presence*], His will, His way of life, becomes ours [the application of intelligent design] -- God provides the *healing* that is necessary, by OUR presence !!

The Church of God community: a *relationship* with God among men, an example, a *working* witness [a living witness] -- the corporate [by a recognition of their form, influence and effect] has to be rejected, including their products, their money and means - there is no such thing as ethical funds; shareholders [claiming the *divine right* of capital] are opposed to equity, they claim profit for perpetuity as right, they are slave-holders in effect, with a claim on the rights and labor of workers, with no real input whatever; it is ** wealth discrimination ** and opposed to the Kingdom of God -- the choice is either for the hard right or the easy wrong -- the price for freedom was Christ's sacrifice - we must be *stewards* NOT consumers [including the COG, hearers only; the Gospel as product is NOT doing the Gospel (doers of the word); a hierarchical form-structure is NOT a *ministry of the brethren*, good stewards of the Spirit of God] -- the want, the need of belief [most are just trying to heal the hurt; the emotion] must be paired with knowledge, intelligence, and active faith, joined as *wisdom*, the application of God's Word, the *power* of God !!

Mammon or Messiah [home page](#) (widescreen)

Mammon or Messiah Appendix 1 [web page](#) (widescreen)

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:50 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Monday, December 20, 2010

Margaret Flowers: End Corporate Domination

End Corporate Domination: More Than Advocacy We Must Resist

by Margaret Flowers [article link](#)

December 20, 2010 | CommonDreams

On December 16, 2009, I stood in the atrium of the Hart Senate Office Building with about a dozen single payer supporters. We were holding signs and standing vigil on the eve of the first time in U.S. history that a single payer bill would make it to the floor of either body in Congress. Senators Sanders, Brown and Burris introduced an amendment that would have substituted a national single payer health insurance for the health bill being created in the Senate at that time.

We celebrated that night because it was a victory, though a small one. Despite all of the corporate dollars and the teams of industry lobbyists opposing single payer, our persistence in pushing for the amendment, which included lobbying, letters, emails and protests at the Senate building, had paid off. The amendment was introduced on the floor of the Senate on December 17th, although it was pulled before it came to a vote.

One year later to the day, I am standing in the snow with hundreds of people, my arms linked behind the bars of the fence in front of the White House. Inside, the President is holding a press conference to report the progress being made in Afghanistan which we know is based on lies. Outside, we are protesting to end the wars in the largest veteran led act of civil disobedience since the beginning of the war on Afghanistan. In all, 131 people were arrested.

We can make some progress working within Congress, but we will never achieve our goals of peace and social and economic justice this way. There are a few like Senator Sanders who are willing to speak out against injustice, but their voices are mere whimpers against the giant winds of the corporate political and media machines. No politician, no matter how strong their understanding of and desire for real social change, can succeed in this hostile environment.

To succeed in creating the social change that we desperately need will require acts of protest and civil disobedience, a new culture of resistance as called for by leaders such as Mike Ferner of Veterans for Peace. It is time to recognize that our advocacy for peace, jobs, education, health, housing, human rights and environmental and economic justice is insufficient. We face the same fundamental obstacle: corporate control of our country.

Together we have the strength and the resources to shift power away from the rich corporations to the people and we can demand social justice. We have the solutions, but they are not being heard. We must cause enough disruption that our voices and our solutions cannot be ignored. And we must organize actions of nonviolent civil resistance. Otherwise growing public discontent in this nation may turn to violent means.

That is why I stood in solidarity with the veterans on December 16th, 2010 and joined them in the action that led to our arrest. As I sat that day in handcuffs on the cold concrete floor of a holding area in Anacostia, a veteran turned to me and said, "It means a lot to me that you are here doctor because you don't have to do this."

The truth is that I do have to do this. For me it is a matter of professional integrity to refuse to cooperate with the current system that results in the growing wealth of a few at the cost of great human suffering and death at home and around the world. I call on you, if you love your country, if you want a peaceful and healthy future for your children and grandchildren, to join in the culture of resistance.

Speak out about injustice wherever you see it. Join or organize actions of nonviolent protest to demand the change that we require. Speak out against the wars that cause so much human suffering and undermine our economic and national security. You can fight foreclosures, the closing of health centers, the closing of schools and poisoning of our air, land and water by factories and power plants. There is much to do. Your voice is needed.

We see the dawning of a new age – the end of corporate domination and the rise of a peaceful and sustainable society. This is a fight for our lives and our future. Join us.

Dr. Margaret Flowers is a pediatrician in Baltimore and co-chair of the Maryland chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [7:17 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Chris Hedges: Bitter Memories of War on the Way to Jail

Bitter Memories of War on the Way to Jail

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 20, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

The speeches were over. There was a mournful harmonica rendition of taps. The 500 protesters in Lafayette Park in front of the White House fell silent. One hundred and thirty-one men and women, many of them military veterans wearing old fatigues, formed a single, silent line. Under a heavy snowfall and to the slow beat of a drum, they walked to the White House fence. They stood there until they were arrested.

The solemnity of that funerary march, the hush, was the hardest and most moving part of [Thursday's protest](#) against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It unwound the bitter memories and images of war I keep wrapped in the thick cotton wool of forgetfulness. I was transported in that short walk to places I do not like to go. Strange and vivid flashes swept over me—the young soldier in El Salvador who had been shot through the back of the head and was, as I crouched next to him, slowly curling up in a fetal position to die; the mutilated corpses of Kosovar Albanians in the back of a flatbed truck; the screams of a woman, her entrails spilling out of her gaping wounds, on the cobblestones of a Sarajevo street. My experience was not unique. Veterans around me were back in the rice paddies and lush undergrowth of Vietnam, the dusty roads of southern Iraq or the mountain passes of Afghanistan. Their tears showed that. There was no need to talk. We spoke the same wordless language. The butchery of war defies, for those who know it, articulation.

What can I tell you about war?

War perverts and destroys you. It pushes you closer and closer to your own annihilation—spiritual, emotional and, finally, physical. It destroys the continuity of life, tearing apart all systems, economic, social, environmental and political, that sustain us as human beings. War is necrophilia. The essence of war is death. War is a state of almost pure sin with its goals of hatred and destruction. It is organized sadism. War fosters alienation and leads inevitably to nihilism. It is a turning away from the sanctity of life.

And yet the mythic narratives about war perpetuate the allure of power and violence. They perpetuate the seductiveness of the godlike force that comes with the license to kill with impunity. All images and narratives about war disseminated by the state, the press, religious institutions, schools and the entertainment industry are gross and distorted lies. The clash between the fabricated myth about war and the truth about war leaves those of us who return from war alienated, angry and often unable to communicate. We can't find the words to describe war's reality. It is as if the wider culture sucked the words out from us and left us to sputter incoherencies. How can you speak meaningfully about organized murder? Anything you say is gibberish.

The sophisticated forms of industrial killing, coupled with the amoral decisions of politicians and military leaders who direct and fund war, hide war's reality from public view. But those who have been in combat see death up close. Only their story tells the moral truth about war. The power of the Washington march was that we all knew this story. We had no need to use stale and hackneyed clichés about war. We grieved together.

War, once it begins, fuels new and bizarre perversities, innovative forms of death to ward off the boredom of routine death. This is why we would drive into towns in Bosnia and find bodies crucified on the sides of barns or decapitated, burned and mutilated. That is why those slain in combat are treated as trophies by their killers, turned into grotesque pieces of performance art. I met soldiers who carried in their wallets the identity cards of men they killed. They showed them to me with the imploring look of a lost child.

We swiftly deform ourselves, our essence, in war. We give up individual conscience—maybe even consciousness—for the contagion of the crowd and the intoxication of violence. You survive war because you repress emotions. You do what you have to do. And this means killing. To make a moral choice, to defy war's enticement, is often self-destructive. But once the survivors return home, once the danger, adrenaline highs and the pressure of the crowd are removed, the repressed emotions surface with a vengeance. Fear, rage, grief and guilt leap up like snake heads to consume lives and turn nights into long, sleepless bouts with terror. You drink to forget.

We reached the fence. The real prisoners, the ones who blindly serve systems of power and force, are the mandarins inside the White House, the Congress and the Pentagon. The masters of war are slaves to the idols of empire, power and greed, to the idols of careers, to the dead language of interests, national security, politics and propaganda. They kill and do not know what killing is. In the rise to power, they became smaller. Power consumes them. Once power is obtained they become its pawn. Like Shakespeare's Richard III, politicians such as Barack Obama fall prey to the forces they thought they had harnessed. The capacity to love, to cherish and protect life, may not always triumph, but it saves us. It keeps us human. It offers the only chance to escape from the contagion of war. Perhaps it is the only antidote. There are times when remaining human is the only victory possible.

The necrophilia of war is hidden under platitudes about honor, duty or comradeship. It waits especially in moments when we seem to have little to live for and no hope, or in moments when the intoxication of war is at its pitch to be unleashed. When we spend long enough in war, it comes to us as a kind of release, a fatal and seductive embrace that can consummate the long flirtation with our own destruction. In the Arab-Israeli 1973 war, almost a third of all Israeli casualties were due to psychiatric causes—and the war lasted only a few days. A World War II study determined that, after 60 days of continuous combat, 98 percent of all surviving soldiers will have become psychiatric casualties. A common trait among the 2 percent who were able to endure sustained combat was a predisposition toward "aggressive psychopathic personalities." In short, if you spend enough time in combat you go insane or you were insane to begin with. War starts out as the annihilation of the other. War ends, if we do not free ourselves from its grasp, in self-annihilation.

Those around me at the protest, at once haunted and maimed by war, had freed themselves of war's contagion. They bore its scars. They were plagued by its demons. These crippling forces will always haunt them. But they had returned home. They had returned to life. They had asked for atonement. In Lafayette Park they found grace. They had recovered within themselves the capacity for reverence. They no longer sought to become gods, to wield the power of the divine, the power to take life. And it is out of this new acknowledgement of weakness, remorse for their complicity in evil and an acceptance of human imperfection that they had found wisdom. Listen to them, if you can hear them. They are our prophets.

The tears and grief, the halting asides, the catch in the throat, the sudden breaking off of a sentence, is the only language that describes war. This faltering language of pain and atonement, even shame, was carried like great, heavy boulders by these veterans as they tromped slowly through the snow from Lafayette Park to the White House fence. It was carried by them as they were handcuffed, dragged through the snow, photographed for arrest, and frog-marched into police vans. It was carried into the frigid holding cells of a Washington jail. If it was understood by the masters of war who build the big guns, who build the death planes, who build all the bombs and who hide behind walls and desks, this language would expose their masks and chasten their hollow, empty souls. This language, bereft of words, places its faith in physical acts of nonviolent resistance, in powerlessness and compassion, in truth. It believes that one day it will bring down the house of war.

As Tennyson wrote in "In Memoriam":

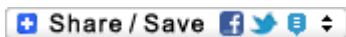
Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

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Chris Hedges writes a regular column for Truthdig.com. Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: [War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning](#), [What Every Person Should Know About War](#), and [American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America](#). His most recent book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [7:10 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Danny Schechter: Battle Over Austerity Measures Has Moved from the Suites to the Streets

Battle Over Austerity Measures Has Moved from the Suites to the Streets

by Danny Schechter [article link](#)

December 19, 2010 | CommonDreams

William Shakespeare put a key question this way; "To Be Or Not To Be?" Today's economists and policy makers pose a different choice: to spend or not to spend.

Governments throughout the west are in a panic as debt mounts and economies contract.

Their solution is cut, cut, cut, in the name of a doctrine called austerity. They are slashing budgets, trimming public payrolls and arguing fatalistically in the spirit of Margaret Thatcher's philosophy, "There Is No alternative." (TINA.)

Austerity is the other name for it, Confronting massive deficits fearful of losing investor confidence. European governments are pulverizing budgets and shutting down public services. The plan by England's new Tory government is considered among the most painful, if not draconian. It is justified as absolutely necessary.

This view is being challenged in the realm of the ideas and with a growing spasm of street protests rocking European cities.

You have probably seen the pictures: A bloodied former Minister in Athens as rioters denounce the IMF which is demanding concessions from their government. Strikes in France, Spain, Portugal, The Czech Republic and Italy had the SWAT teams out in force. A meeting this week in Germany by Eurozone Ministers is unlikely to please anyone.

At time when most people are saying the path out of the financial crisis and European debt problem is for individuals and governments around the world to cut back, the American economist Paul Krugman wants us to [spend, spend, spend](#).

What's behind the fervor for austerity, he asks?

"The answer is" he writes, is "to reassure the markets - because the markets supposedly won't believe in the willingness of governments to engage in long-run fiscal reform unless they inflict pointless pain right now. To repeat: the whole argument rests on the presumption that markets will turn on us unless we demonstrate a willingness to suffer, even though that suffering serves no purpose."

This argument has moved off the op-ed pages and into the streets. These protests conjuring up a revival of the class war confrontations of the 1930's are erupting in many countries.

The marches are becoming more militant and bitter, as clashes between the police and angry protesters grow in intensity marked by scattered violence.

Symbolically, the one incident that received massive coverage was a student attack on British Royalty when Prince Charles car was attacked with some protesters chanting, "off with their heads."

Reported the Telegraph,

"Demonstrators kicked the Rolls-Royce as it traveled to the Royal Variety Performance in central London. White paint and bottles were thrown over the car and a window shattered.

The Prince and Duchess (Camilla Parker-Bowles) were "unharmed" and continued with their engagement at the London Palladium, a Clarence House spokesman said.

The attack, caught on amateur video showed a how startled the Royal couple was even though afterwards "the Duchess, later laughed off the attack, When asked how she was as she left the London Palladium, the Duchess said: "I'm fine thanks - first time for everything."

It may have been the first time but as more austerity measures are expected, it is unlikely to be the last.

These protests reflect more that dissatisfaction with a single issue but seem to be a reflection of growing public disenchantment with unresponsive government, an untrustworthy media and a failing economy.

So far, conservative governments are ignoring the criticisms and moving forward with their slashing of worker and unemployment benefits and the social safety net. In England, the Parliament voted to raise tuitions -- cap is set to rise to \$14,500 by 2012, higher than the current average of \$7,605 at U.S. state universities-- but the student protests are surprising officials by their tenacity.

Just watch the passion of this 15 year old speaking at a rally the University of London: [YouTube video](#).

Student activists like this are becoming radicalized and can become contagious, argues Gary Younge in Guardian:

"As these protests intensify - as they are bound to - we can expect them to be routinely disparaged on the right as either privileged kids acting out or innocents led astray by revolutionaries

...That students and youth in Europe have erupted at this moment, however, should come as no surprise. More than one in five people under the age of 25 in the EU is unemployed. In Spain the figure is 43%; in Greece 30%; in Italy 26%. Meanwhile the principle that education is a public good, to which all are entitled, all contribute, and all benefit through a more competitive economy, is in its death throes."

In the United States, A Republican-dominated Congress, swept into power on the backs of right wing Tea Party activism spurred by Fox News and other fear-driven conservative media, promises to roll back government programs even as it "compromises" with Dems to keep tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires.

So far, there has been little street activism in the United States. Perhaps it's because of the Christmas shopping season, the inundation of entertainment shows and sporting events or just so little oppositional leadership, especially among Democrats unwilling to challenge a Democratic President who has just negotiated a compromise deal with Republican tax cutters.

Only one Senator, Bernie Sanders, the independent from Vermont had the guts to take on Barack Obama in an 8 hour and 37 minute near filibuster speech that drove up the ratings of CSPAN, the congressional TV channel. [article link](#) (Huffington Post)

Commented blogger David Seth Michaels: "it was the most important political speech-- by far-- of the past two years. Seldom, if ever, has anyone seized the spotlight to discuss and examine so thoroughly the plundering of the nation by its wealthiest citizens. And to demand so clearly that the government provide genuine relief for the millions of Americans who are now suffering the consequences of the plunder."

But his supporters did not pour into the streets, at least not yet. Sanders has been challenging what he calls his: "progressive friends" on these very issues, "I have long been concerned that some progressive activists do not stand up and fight effectively or pay enough attention to the needs of ordinary Americans."

When they do speak out, many prefer sending emails or organizing Facebook pages. Where is the outrage and sense of solidarity or militancy? The unions are quiescent, most pols seem incapable of inspiring anyone. Has this generation been seduced by their iPads and smartphones?

Has everyone forgotten that call to get involved? Remember the dicta, "It's not the ship that makes the waves, it's the motion on the ocean." It may take time, but it is likely in the not too distant future that American activists will emulate the movements now emerging in Europe.

Governments have the power to impose their austerity measures, but not without a fight. As things get worse, Bob Dylan's pithy blast from the past may be back to characterize the times ahead: "A Hard Rain Is Going To Fall?"

[Mediachannel](#)'s News Dissector **Danny Schechter** investigates the origins of the economic crisis in his new book [Plunder: Investigating Our Economic Calamity and the Subprime Scandal](#) (Cosimo Books via Amazon). Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

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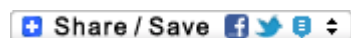
Student Protests and the Emerging Discontent of Youth

by Oliver Huitson [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 18, 2010 | New Left Project | Global Research

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [6:41 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Saturday, December 18, 2010

Timothy V. Gatto: American Hedgeonomy: The Final Outcome

American Hedgeonomy: The Final Outcome

By Timothy V. Gatto [article link](#)

December 18, 2010 | LiberalPro | OpEdNews

The idea of supporting Democrats has come and gone...a long time ago. The two-party government in place in the United States is a travesty. There are no provisions for it in the Constitution. This is something that has evolved over time. In actuality, there really hasn't been much of a difference between the two parties. The only time that there was a marked difference was when FDR used a variation of socialism to fight the depression.

The Central Banks were replaced by loans at low interest by the government. The WPA and the CCC that put people to work were offshoots of Socialist ideas. The start of World War Two and the return to private industry was the end of Roosevelt's experiments in socialism.

Since then, the military industrial complex that Eisenhower warned us about has blurred the lines between the two parties. Like the Roman Empire, thousands of years ago, the American Empire has never fought an offensive war. We have always been fighting "threats" to our way of life. While many of our best and brightest were being savagely killed and crippled by our "enemies", corporations were making ungodly profits on war materials with plenty of funds for research and development for new weapons to kill human beings.

Of course many Americans blame the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China for putting us on this path. That entire premise is a lie. The truth is that anyone in any type of influence in any country, were hunted down and murdered by clandestine agencies of the United States and Britain. This seems to be the case still. Any regime, from Iran to Venezuela to Bolivia that doesn't follow the United States world view is regarded as an enemy, not only to the United States government, but to the people of the United States. Intellectuals that write about the excesses of the American Empire are relegated to the sidelines. People like John Pilger, Michel Chossudovsky, Ramsey Clark, Michael Moore, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Andrew Gavin Marshall, Richard Cook, John Kozy, Ray McGovern, Ron Paul, Gareth Porter, William Bowles, David Swanson, Paul Craig Roberts, Chris Hedges, Phil Rockstroh, and so many more including Timothy V. Gatto, A former Army sergeant with over twenty years of service (me). Please don't feel excluded because I left anyone out. I know there are so many more of you out there.

We have no voice that reaches mainstream America. There are a few online: OpEdNews.com (which has undergone a radical change for the better), DandelionSalad, The Real News Network headed by Paul Jay, Information Clearinghouse run by Tom Sweeney, Media with a Conscience (Al Jazeera), The Peoples Voice.com, MediaLeft, and Countercurrents are just a few. The trouble with this is that they are only known but to a few, not the many.

There is Pseudo-left media outlets that don't stray too much from the dictates of the government-influenced mainstream media such as Daily Kos, Huffington Post, Democratic Underground (which sometimes breaks the mold) and Progressive Democrats of America (Which still can surprise). Overseas we have the Atlantic Free Press and numerous other ex-pat websites. The Rolling Stone which still tries to stay true to the truth is still printing. The Village Voice and others try to keep their independence. There are certain monthlies such as the Nation that try to pass themselves off as anti-establishment, but fail miserably in actually breaking any real truth and sustenance. Their intentions are good, but they just can't say what needs to be said. Some publications that should know better just succumb to the pressure of the powers that be. It's a thorny situation.

Time, Newsweek, and other mega-publications take the "middle-ground" on almost everything. The New York Times, The Washington Post and other newspapers have fallen completely under the spell of government censorship. The New York Times will hold a story for over a year until it gets the go-ahead from the government to publish a story. By that time, the story isn't even news anymore. Does this bother any of you? It sure galls the hell out of me.

What about television? The news on television is just about the worst kind of reporting. The major networks, CBS, NBC, and ABC won't broadcast anything that hasn't been vetted by every other type of media and published before airtime. They'll run fluff and "human interest" stories at the expense of actual news that would embarrass the government and draw criticism to their newsrooms. The last time I saw CBS run an exposé that mattered was the amount of suicides among discharged veterans of the Middle-East wars. Armand Kataian was the reporter. He must have some clout with CBS.

If you believe you will get "real news" from PBS or the BBC, you may glean just a little more information, but not the real truth. They too must dance to the tune of their corporate sponsors. Most are related to the defense industries, and they can be as exacting as the government... if not more so.

People must realize this, in our capitalistic country, money talks... bullshit walks. If you just happen to really piss off your sponsors, your revenue will drop and you will be treated like a leper. There isn't a defense contractor that will sponsor your program if you badmouth them. When you think of defense contractors, don't just think of Lockheed-Martin, Or Northrop-Grumman, think of General Electric and Westinghouse and all of their subsidiaries (in fact, they own two major networks, imagine that, the two corporations that make atomic bombs). Look at the Sunday morning news programs like "Face the Nation" and "Meet the Press". Every other commercial is brought to you by a defense contractor. Their reach is unbelievable. The reason for that is because the United States has become a nation that has very few industries that are as large as the corporations that invent and sell weapons.

This is our undoing. When you watch the current President cave under pressure from the Republicans, just remember that the only truly viable industries in this country are those that make weapons of war. They control the media and with that control, they influence public opinion.

For the last few weeks I have felt completely impotent. Every time I went to write an article on events that have transpired, I was reluctant to submit my work because I had written the same thing over and over again. I am a fan of Rick Rozoff, the only writer that puts the news in the context of military events. It's been weeks since I really felt that I had anything to say that hadn't already been written. Rick Rozoff is published primarily by Global Research, just about the only think tank in this planet that I trust. He also footnotes everything he writes, unlike me who only does that when the occasion warrants it.

I'm a writer, not an academic. I write what I see and I try to convince others that what I see is valid. There are other writers that have the benefit of being able to prove what they say. Rick Rozoff is such a writer. David Swanson is another. I operate from a small home in South Carolina. I read what I can and I try to sort the wheat from the chaff by taking what I've learned through everything I've read and what I know to be true by examining history, motives, and facts. There are others out there that know a hell of a lot more than I know. Throughout my six years of writing about political events, I've been able to feel confident that there are a few people that really know what is actually happening behind the scenes because they do the diligent research that unmask the truth, and that is undoubtedly the most important variable in anything.

We are on a collision course with fascism. We are also on a collision course with a world-wide conflagration. World War III is right around the corner. The United States seems to want this to occur. Like Bush, the current American President believes that only a major war will bring the United States out of economic decline. A limited War against North Korea would bring employment (especially in the defense industry), maybe conscription which would reduce unemployment, and if China intervened, the elimination of the debt that we owe to that nation. It would bring about a common-cause that would reduce friction between the left and the right. We would all have a common purpose. Our industrial capacity would rise and unemployment would drop substantially. A new "Golden Age" would again encompass the nation.

This could be a wonderful scenario...discounting the death and destruction that would envelop Korea, China and the mass casualties that would envelope China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Australian and New Zealand (that we just made defense treaties with). American soldiers would also be added to the dead, but then... we have too many unemployed as it is.

As long as Russia stays on the side-lines, this is the military industrial concept of nirvana. After the war, we will control most of Asia, the Middle-East, and the majority of Europe, and that is quite an accomplishment. Maybe we could be responsible for a Pax-Americana...Unless things don't go exactly as we plan.

Still, no matter what the outcome., the things that our government is doing are wrong. The cables that were released on Wikileaks have been eye-opening to say the least. I'm an agnostic. I don't believe in God. I still know the difference between right and wrong. The way we manipulate governments and societies across the globe is wrong. We have become the enemy we fought when we waged war on Nazi Germany. We are no better than they were.

Our government should be concerned with the people it governs. We should protect our nation. That doesn't mean that we have the right to invade our citizen's personal freedoms and to subject our citizen's to unwarranted searches and seizures because of their political or religious beliefs. We all have a right to our own opinions, even if it differs from that of our government. Being different does not make one a criminal. That happened in Hitler's Germany.

The media should be free and unfettered. Now that corporate interests rule the mainstream media, thinking people only have the alternative media. Since the release of classified information by Wikileaks, we find that the government is seeking the authority to shut down the internet, the last bastion of free thought in a corporate ruled world. Americans of every persuasion should fight any attempt to shut down the World Wide Web. To do so would stop the flow of independent thought. It would curtail the give and take of independent ideas.

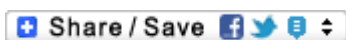
We are in perilous times. The "terrorist threat" is all-pervasive. The reality is that the United States has been the greatest recruiting tool for any terrorist organization. We want to control the world's resources. That is the ultimate quest. If there is a nation that has resources the United States needs, they can expect clandestine agents first, and if that fails, the U.S military later.

How long will the American people put up with this? Until they know the truth...it will be when we subjugate the world or the world puts an end to the United States.

Former Chairman of the Liberal Party of America, Timothy Gatto is a retired Army Sergeant. He currently lives in South Carolina. A regular contributor to OpEdNews, he is the author of *Kimchee Days or Stoned Cold Warriors* and is currently at work on a new novel. Tim's political book, "[From Complicity to Contempt](#)" and "[Kimchee Days](#)" can be purchased at most online booksellers. The second book in the political series called "*Contempt to Outrage*" is due to come out Nov 15, 2010.

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[Sherwood Ross: On the Meaning of Patriotism](#)

On the Meaning of Patriotism: Manning within his Rights to Give Secrets to Wikileaks

by Sherwood Ross [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 18, 2010 | Global Research | OpEdNews

As the U.S. is now an international aggressor, do Americans still owe it allegiance?

If a citizen releases information about *crimes* the U.S. commits, can he or she be legally punished? These questions arise in connection with the arrests of Australian Julian Assange and PFC Bradley Manning, a U.S. Army intelligence analyst believed to be the source of the secret government cables published by Assange's WikiLeaks Web site.

Thanks to the long arm of Uncle Sam, Assange is now being held under house arrest by its UK criminal co-conspirator in the Middle East wars and Manning now resides in the U.S. Marine Corps brig at Quantico, Va. Although not convicted of any crime, Manning for seven months allegedly has been subjected to solitary confinement, perhaps *the* most diabolical punishment ever devised by American wardens. Studies of U.S. prisoners subjected to it show they suffer mental deterioration and insanity. This harsh punishment prior to any trial betrays the face of the tyrant state.

Under ordinary circumstances, the release of information labeled “secret” violates U.S. law, as intelligence specialist Manning undoubtedly knew. But if the U.S. is an aggressor state, as Germany was when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, doesn't that change everything? America under President George W. Bush attacked two small nations that posed no threat to it. Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan told BBC the US-led invasion of Iraq was “illegal.” He said it contravened the UN Charter as the attack lacked Security Council approval. MIT Professor Noam Chomsky in his book “*Imperial Ambitions*,” (Metropolitan), called the U.S. invasion of Iraq as “open an act of aggression as there has been in modern history, a major war crime.” By ratifying the UN Charter the U.S. agreed to refrain “from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state...” And international law authority Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois, Champaign, called the invasion of Afghanistan “an illegal armed aggression that has created a humanitarian catastrophe” for its 22 millions. (*Destroying World Order*, Clarity Press.)

And as these invasions *are* criminal, why shouldn't pertinent information about them not be brought to light? Whenever has it been wrong to expose a criminal enterprise? Public-spirited citizens go to the police and FBI every day to report crimes. “Under international law,” says Boyle, professor of that subject, “citizens have a basic human right to resist the commission of international crimes by their own government, especially aggression...” And this is what PFC Manning did. He resisted aggression by informing Americans of how their government breaks laws. The *Associated Press* reports Manning told an associate, “I want people to see the truth...because without information you cannot make informed decisions as a public.” America's Founders believed that, too, and made a free press a cornerstone of the new nation. Ann Medlock, Founder of the Giraffe Heroes Project, says, “In a perfect world, institutions would listen to their staffers when they point out errors, lapses of ethics, and outright chicanery within the organization. Then those holding power would correct those flaws. But...that hasn't been the reality. Again and again authorities just blast away at the truthsayers rather than addressing the problems.” In a democratic society, wouldn't the Pentagon commend Boyle for calling to attention the murder of innocent civilians and reporters by a helicopter gunship?

Webster's (Random House) defines a patriot as one who “loves, supports, and defends his or her country and its interests.” The word “defends” here is critical. The wars the U.S. is waging in the Middle East are not defensive but offensive, thus it is unpatriotic to support them. In its highest sense, patriotism means citizen opposition to a totalitarian regime, not support for it. Looking back, who do Germans today honor and revere as “patriots” during the Hitler years if not the students of the White Rose Society? Ask yourself if those students were guilty of treason for passing out leaflets that denounced Hitler's crimes? Hitler thought so and they were arrested, tortured and decapitated. Yet the students were only trying to reach their fellow Germans with truths Hitler tried to conceal. How different is PFC Manning's actions from theirs? PFC Manning appears to be within his rights as any whistle-blower to divulge information that exposes U.S. crimes.

Today, the American warfare state is a tyranny that operates 800 military bases abroad (in addition to 1,000 on its own soil) and spends more for war than the next 15 nations combined. It kidnaps people off the streets around the world and dispatches them to remote prisons where they are held incognito and tortured. It is the world's No. 1 Jailer, with tens of thousands imprisoned in the Middle East against whom no charges ever have been brought. It taps the telephones of UN officials and, as WikiLeaks disclosed, orders its diplomats to spy on their foreign counterparts. It leads the world in the sale of armaments to dictators. It violates anti-nuclear covenants and uses illegal irradiated ammunition on battlefields. It attacks small countries that have never attacked it and its CIA sows mayhem as it overthrows other countries (Iran and Chile are examples) by force and violence. President Obama's decision not to prosecute his predecessor for making illegal wars turns the Constitution into toilet paper.

Chalmers Johnson wrote in “*The Sorrows of Empire*,” (Metropolitan/Owl Books), “the growth of militarism, official secrecy, and a belief that the United States is no longer bound, as the Declaration of Independence so famously puts it, by “a decent respect for the opinions of mankind” is probably irreversible. A revolution would be required to bring the Pentagon back under democratic control, or to abolish the Central Intelligence Agency...” Johnson does not advocate revolution; he means an earth-shaking change needs to occur. As revolutions involve violence and proceed by force rather than reason, in point of fact, Americans who feel obliged to restore democracy here would be better off following Dr. King's example of exerting non-violent “soul force” to effect change. The American people have been led into wars based on lies, fictions, and secrets and should be grateful to Assange and Manning for revealing the truth of this misconduct. PFC Manning is no traitor but an American patriot. Like Julian Assange, he should be set free now.

Sherwood Ross worked as a reporter for the Chicago Daily News and contributed a regular "Workplace" column for Reuters. He has contributed to national magazines and hosted a talk show on WOL, Washington, D.C. In the Sixties he was active as public relations director for a major civil rights organization. Sherwood Ross is director of the Anti-War News Service. To contribute to his service, or comment, contact him at sherwoodross10@gmail.com. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [1:05 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Chris Hedges: Hope, From Now On, Will Look Like This](#)

Hope, from now on, will look like this

Chris Hedges Speech Before Joining Anti War Vets in DC Civil Disobedience Action

By Chris Hedges [article link](#)

December 18, 2010 | OpEdNews

Chris Hedges gave this speech to the assemblage of Anti-war veterans and activists preparing to be arrested for civil disobedience at the White House gates on Thursday, December 16. Hedges was among the 130+ who were arrested.

Hope, from now on, will look like this.

Hope will not come in trusting in the ultimate goodness of Barack Obama, who, like Herod of old, sold out his people. It will not be realized by chanting packaged campaign slogans or attempting to influence the democratic party. It will not come through our bankrupt liberal institutions-- from the press, to the withered stump that is the labor movement.

Hope will only come now when we physically defy the violence of the state. All who resist, all who are here today, keep hope alive. All who succumb to fear, despair and apathy become an enemy of hope. They become, in their passivity, agents of injustice.

It is not having a positive attitude or pretending that happy thoughts and false optimism will make the world better. Hope is not about chanting packaged campaign slogans or trusting in the better nature of the Democratic Party. Hope does not mean that our protests will suddenly awaken the dead consciences, the atrophied souls, of the plutocrats running Halliburton, Goldman Sachs, ExxonMobil or the government.

If the enemies of hope are finally victorious in this nation, the poison of violence will become not only the language of power but the language of opposition. And those who resist with nonviolence are the last thin line of defense between a civil society and its disintegration.

Hope has a cost. Hope is not comfortable or easy. Hope requires personal risk. It is not about the right attitude. Hope is not about peace of mind. Hope is action. Hope is doing something. The more futile, the more useless, the more irrelevant and incomprehensible an act of rebellion is, the vaster and more potent hope becomes.

Hope never makes sense. Hope is weak, unorganized and absurd. Hope, which is always nonviolent, exposes in its powerlessness, the lies, fraud and coercion employed by the state. Hope knows that an injustice visited on our neighbor is an injustice visited on all of us. Hope posits that people are drawn to the good by the good. This is the secret of hope's power. Hope demands for others what we demand for ourselves. Hope does not separate us from them. Hope sees in our enemy our own face.

Hope is not for the practical and the sophisticated, the cynics and the complacent, the defeated and the fearful. Hope is what the corporate state which saturates our airwaves with lies seeks to obliterate. Hope is what this corporate state is determined to crush. Be afraid, they tell us. Surrender your liberties to us so we can make the world safe from terror. Don't resist. Embrace the alienation of our cheerful conformity. Buy our products. Without them you are worthless. Become our brands. Do not look up from your electronic hallucinations. No. Above all do not think. Obey.

The powerful do not understand hope. Hope is not part of their vocabulary. They speak in the cold, dead words of national security, global markets, electoral strategy, staying on message, image and money. The powerful protect their own. They divide the world into the damned and the blessed, the patriots and the enemy, the privileged and the weak. They insist that extinguishing lives in foreign wars or in our prison complexes is a form of human progress.

They cannot see that the suffering of a child in Kandehar or a child in the blighted urban pocket of our nation's capitol diminishes and impoverishes us all. They are deaf, dumb and blind to hope. Those addicted to power, enthralled by self-exaltation, cannot decipher the words of hope any more than most of us can decipher hieroglyphics.

Hope to Wall Street bankers and politicians, to the masters of war and commerce, is not practical. It is gibberish. It means nothing. And this is because they kneel before the idols of greed and money.

If we resist and carry out acts, no matter how small, of open defiance, hope will not be extinguished. If all we accomplish today is to assure a grieving mother in Baghdad or Afghanistan, a young man or woman crippled physically and emotionally by the hammer blows of war, that he or she is not alone, our act will be successful. But hope cannot be sustained if it cannot be seen.

Any act of rebellion, any physical defiance of those who make war, of those who perpetuate corporate greed and are responsible for state crimes, anything that seeks to draw the good to the good, nourishes our souls and holds out the possibility that we can touch and transform the souls of others. Hope affirms that which we must affirm. And every act that imparts hope is a victory in itself.

(from Auden)

Defenseless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

Chris Hedges, currently a senior fellow at [The Nation Institute](http://www.thenationinstitute.org) and a Lecturer in the Council of the Humanities and the Anschutz Distinguished Fellow at Princeton University, spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. Hedges, who has reported from more than 50 countries, worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, The Dallas Morning News and The New York Times, where he spent fifteen years. He is the author of the best selling “[War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning](#),” which draws on his experiences in various conflicts to describe the patterns and behavior of nations and individuals in wartime. The book, a finalist for The National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction, was described by Abraham Verghese, who reviewed the book for The New York Times, as “...a brilliant, thoughtful, timely and unsettling book whose greatest merit is that it will rattle jingoists, pacifists, moralists, nihilists, politicians and professional soldiers equally.”

Hedges was part of the New York Times team that won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for the paper's coverage of global terrorism and he received the 2002 Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. He published his most recent book, "[Losing Moses on the Freeway: The 10 Commandments in America](#)" in June 2005.

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Daniel Ellsberg, Ray McGovern, Margaret Flowers Speak Before Their Arrests At White House Protest

By Rob Kall [article link](#)

December 18, 2010 | OpEdNews

OpEdNews [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:55 PM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Friday, December 17, 2010

[Dave Lefcourt: Today's Civil Resistance Action Outside The White House](#)

Today's Civil Resistance Action Outside The White House

By Dave Lefcourt [article link](#)

December 16, 2010 | OpEdNews

The action began at 10 AM this morning with a crowd numbering about a thousand people milling about a makeshift podium.

It was cold, below freezing and then it started to snow.

Included in the thousand were many Viet Nam era vets (about 300) who it seemed to outnumber the Iraq/Afghan war vets by 3 to 1. Women's numbers were also about 300 with most of them in their 50's, while the rest (again about 300) were senior men (over 60) that came despite the elements.

There were a few reporter types milling about talking with and interviewing some participants.

Though obviously cold the crowd responded enthusiastically to the speakers which included Daniel Ellsberg, Chris Hedges, Medea Benjamin, Ray McGovern and some recent vets (men and women) of the Iraq/Afghan wars.

As the speakers concluded their talks and precisely at 11 AM the call went out to "fall in" and a single file procession of participants (many with signs opposing the wars) began walking from Lafayette Park (across from the White House) to the sound of a single drum beat to the White House fence area whereby some 200 or so (of the 1000) each scaled over a 4' high temporary barrier and immediately rushed the W.H. fence and stood side by side.

It was said these 200 had met the previous evening and together made the decision to remain at the W.H. fence with the intent (and knowing) their civil resistance would get them arrested.

The scene had some 50 Park Police scattered and obviously just standing by for the order to start arresting people. The police had placed "Do Not Cross" barrier tape around the area essentially sealing it off. Buses (curiously City Metro buses) were parked some 25 yards from the people at the fence.

About 1 PM an officer with a bull horn announced those remaining by the fence were in "violation" and if they didn't leave they would be arrested. As expected no one left the fence and the police proceeded to move those on the fence to an open tented area where they were arrested, processed and taken on the buses to an offsite detention facility (and based on remarks from vets that were arrested during other civil actions all should be released by tomorrow at the latest).

It must be said this was a completely non violent, civil resistance action solely focused on ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In no instance was there a confrontation with police (a requirement made clear by the protest leader of anyone taking part in the action). In fact you could say the action was purely a " non violent resistance" in the spirit of the civil rights protests led by Martin Luther King in the 1960's.

The 200 hundred by choosing to be arrested hoped that their action would be a catalyst for other civil resistance actions to take place across the country that these type actions mushroom and hundreds, perhaps thousands of other Americans would pick up the challenge of resistance initiated today as they take their own action to help stop the wars.

Our leaders, the president and the Congress are not listening to the people. The people are not consulted and the people's representatives have become sycophantic enablers to whatever executive sits in the White House particularly when it comes to taking the country to war.

With the Congress not functioning and acting as representatives of the people it becomes incumbent upon the people themselves through their own resistance to demand these unnecessary wars be brought to an end.

The veterans of our wars (who know first hand the horror of war and the consequences that befall all who get caught up in war) are leading the way.

We must not falter and abandon them by sitting idly by passively believing nothing can be done.

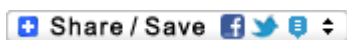
It can be done if we empower ourselves and actively join in the resistance.

Today was just the beginning.

Dave Lefcourt is retired. He is the author of "[Deceit and Excess in America: How Moneyed Interests Have Stolen America And How We Can Get It Back](#)", Authorhouse, 2009. His email address is dglefc22733@aol.com.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:51 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

Michael Brenner: Obama's War on WikiLeaks - and Us

Obama's War on WikiLeaks - and Us

By Michael Brenner [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 16, 2010 | Huffington Post | ICH

The casual way that Americans are shredding their liberties is breathtaking. Rights that have been revered as the nation's spiritual heirloom for 225 years are cast aside like so many disposable keepsakes. We pretend that we still prize the ideals of which they are emblematic even as they are tossed aside. Only a people confused by runaway emotions, and forgetful of their identity, can act with such feckless abandon.

Blatant violations of basic legal rights and protections have been a feature of the 9/11 decade in America. Wholesale electronic surveillance, arbitrary detention, intrusive investigations of persons and organization without cause or court order, the participation of the CIA and military intelligence in contravention of stipulated prohibitions -- a wide array of unsavory and illegal practices. This past week has seen official lawlessness reach new depths.

The Obama administration's extrajudicial assault on WikiLeaks and the person of Julian Assange is the most frightening. Federal officials have put the muscle on private businesses to deny their services to both Wikileaks and anyone who wishes to extend financial support to them. The fact that PayPal, Amazon, Mastercard, Visa et al are de facto public utilities underscores the abuse of governmental power.

The Justice Department also may well have brought pressure on the Swedish government to enlist Interpol in the pursuit of Mr. Assange for surreal sexual offenses, still unstated, that prosecutors have been fondling for two months. (Allegedly Washington is threatening to cut off intelligence sharing to the newly frightened authorities in Stockholm). Now there are reports that the Swedes are collaborating with Washington to keep Assange in British detention long enough for him to be indicted on some contrived charge or other by the Justice Department, acting in complete secrecy. In addition, the United States Air Force has blacked out electronic access on all its computers to newspapers who have published excerpts from the leaked cables. Employees are further enjoined from reading said papers under pain of severe sanction. A general order prohibits each and every DoD employee even from looking at hard copy editions -- whether in the sanctity of their homes or in the lobby of Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel. This is the Stars & Stripes version of repressive practices used by autocratic regimes the world over -- practices that Washington righteously denounces as odious attacks on freedom.

The key point, overriding everything else, is that the United States has no legal authority to do any of these things. It did not seek legal authority. The White House and Pentagon simply arrogate to themselves the power to punish as they arbitrarily see fit. American officials from Barack Obama on down are declaring their right to inflict penalties on citizens based on nothing more than their will and whim. The premise, and the precedent, are in direct contravention of our fundamental liberties. There is no distinction in kind between these actions and the federal government's denying any individual or group DSL service or electricity because those utilities could be used to do things embarrassing to those who wield power in Washington.

As distressing as this situation is, that distress is compounded by the eerie silence that surrounds this historic power grab. The mainstream media make no editorial criticism, the news columns ignore the civil liberties issues -- as do the op-ed columns (Eugene Robinson is a notable exception), the bar associations utter not a word, the universities continue along their insular ways, and politicians either cry for Assange's blood (literally) or cower in dread of being labeled soft on saboteurs of the nation's security. It is especially noteworthy that The New York Times, itself culpable of, or accessory to whatever alleged crimes Mr. Assange may be accused of, has kept its lips discretely, if unheroically sealed.

The American collective state of mind has become incapable of making the elementary, basic distinction between personal preference and law. To raise the matter with colleagues and friends is to elicit responses dictated solely by what one thinks of Wikileaks, Assange and their doings. That is a logical non sequitur and ethically obtuse. My personal feelings about them have nothing to do with my judgment about the illegality and arbitrariness of what our government is doing. Nor should it. One should be fierce in denouncing this violation of our principles and laws whatever/whomever the object of the abuses. We used to understand that.

To round out the week's dismaying news on the civil liberties front, a Federal District Court judge, John Bates, threw out a lawsuit aimed at preventing the United States from targeting U.S.-born, Yemeni based Anwar al-Awlaki whom our security agencies have put on a kill hit list. The suit was brought by the cleric's father. The Obama Justice Department's opposition was grounded on the claim that the court has no legal authority to review the president when he makes military decisions to protect Americans against terrorist attacks. Judge Bates dismissed the suit in saying that only Mr. al-Awlaki has the legal standing to make the case. So now we have judicial confirmation of the right of unstated officials using unstated criteria to liquidate an American citizen on their own volition alone. The target's only apparent recourse is to secrete himself into a federal courthouse, along with lawyers, without getting himself gunned down on the way in. Again, virtually no public comment.

How have we reached this point? The obvious answer is fear -- fear exploited by self-serving elected officials whose own political interests trump their oath of office to protect and obey the constitution of the United States of America. Fear and the craven behavior it spawns. Supposedly we are a people whose bravery keep us free -- supposedly.

Michael Brenner: Senior Fellow the Center for Transatlantic Relations, SAIS-Johns Hopkins (Washington, D.C.). Author of numerous books, and over 60 articles and published papers. Recent works on American foreign policy and the Middle East are "Fear & Dread In The Middle East", and "Democracy Promotion & Islam". He also has written "Nuclear Power and Non-Proliferation" (Cambridge University Press) and "The Politics of International Monetary Reform" for the Center For International Affairs at Harvard. His work has appeared in major journals in the United States and Europe, such as Europe's World, European Affairs, World Politics, Comparative Politics, Foreign Policy, International Studies Quarterly, International Affairs, Survival, Politique Etrangere, and Internationale Politik.

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David McKee: Afghanistan War: The Crucible for Reorienting Canadian Foreign Policy

Afghanistan War: The Crucible for Reorienting Canadian Foreign Policy

by David McKee [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Operation Apollo, Operation Athena, Operation Archer, Operation Accius, Operation Altair ... since Canada first entered the war on Afghanistan in 2001 the list of extensions, renewals and "spin-offs" has gone on and on and on. Originally scheduled to end in 2003, Canada's involvement in this imperialist aggression threatens to continue until 2014 if Prime Minister Stephen Harper gets his way.

Afghanistan has been the central preoccupation of Canadian foreign policy over the past decade. It has also been a main focus of peace movement activity. Mobilizations against the war in Afghanistan have not been nearly as spectacular as those against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The build up was slower, and it took more time to locate a basis of unity upon which to build mobilizations.

But, for the entire decade, opinion polls have repeatedly shown that a majority of Canadians disagree with the war. Despite massive spending on huge PR campaigns to "sell" the war to the public, and the constant ideological bombardment from the government, the military and its allied industries, and the corporate media, Canadians remain opposed to this war.

Yet successive Canadian governments (both Liberal and Conservative) have pursued a policy of war. Clearly, the state has an interest in the Afghanistan war that surpasses (and diminishes) the electoral concerns of any individual party or government. Examining and understanding this interest is key to strengthening both the anti-war effort and the broader movement for peace and progress.

The advanced sections of the peace movements have long understood that the war in Afghanistan was never a localized conflict. From the get-go, it was part of a regional campaign that includes the war against Iraq and Israel's role in the Middle East.

To overly simplify the situation, the war in Afghanistan was a key component in the drive by the United States (and its Canadian and British allies) to recolonize a huge, resource-rich area of the world. While this view is quite correct, it is obviously a truncated assessment of a much more complicated issue.

A related way of looking at things is to view the war in Afghanistan as the crucible in which a new direction in Canadian foreign policy is being tested and clarified. There are a number of elements to this policy shift:

- * a deliberate and dramatic shift away from UN-oriented multilateralism toward an "ad-hoc" multilateralism. (There are many problems with the United Nations, but to replace it with makeshift "coalitions of the willing" is nothing short of gangster politics on a global scale);
- * a heightened emphasis on NATO and identifying a new role for that military alliance;
- * a definite move away from "traditional peacekeeping" (again, there are plenty of problems with this role and these missions, but Canada is certainly not moving toward an improved model);
- * a more aggressive posture in foreign policy, with greater emphasis on military action, sanctions, terror lists, etc., instead of development, diplomacy, cooperation, and peace;
- * a more brash statement of Canadian economic interests as key to foreign policy developments.

These changes are deeply at play in Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. Perhaps the clearest example is the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS), the Harper government's blueprint for defence and foreign policy. The following excerpts from a 2008 Canadian Peace Congress statement on CFDS provide a sense of the scope of the reorientation in Canadian foreign policy, how tightly related it is to the war in Afghanistan, and the profound implications it has for domestic policy:

"CFDS is the manifesto of the most aggressive circles of Canadian finance capital seeking with a bigger military budget to strengthen its influence at the round tables in Washington and Brussels.

"The CFDS flaunts military power as the essential ingredient of Canadian diplomacy in international affairs. CFDS promotes the growth, modernization and combat readiness of the Canadian military and its interoperability with US military forces for one main reason, to commit Canada to current and future US-NATO wars, interventions and occupations as the first principle of Canadian government foreign policy. CFDS boasts of the experience gained by Canadian forces in Afghanistan as a 'military that can operate far from home on a sustained basis'. According to Prime Minister Harper the ability to wage war is the path that will return Canada to the international stage as a 'credible and influential country.'

"CFDS elevates commitments to NATO, NORAD, NORTHCOM, the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) and the Civil Assistance Plan, the latter permitting US troops on Canadian soil in the event of a 'civil emergency', above all other Canadian international obligations and treaties. As such CFDS actually weakens Canadian sovereignty by subordinating Canadian defense policy to the global military strategy of the US and NATO.

"Fear-mongering about alleged threats to Canadian security is the method used by the Conservative government to justify massive transfers of public finances, without Parliamentary approval, to foreign and domestic defence contractors to stimulate a speculative expansion of the economy. This is what is meant by the 'military partnership with Canadian industry'.

"CFDS is profoundly undemocratic and was implemented without seeking Parliamentary approval and commits \$492 billion over 20 years on top of the \$5.3 billion already allocated in 2006, approaching 2.2% of GDP, all to guarantee the profits of defence contractors and investors. The Canadian government policy of the rapid militarization of the economy is the only job creation project the Government has to offer youth, the unemployed and the underemployed. CFDS cannot be implemented without sacrificing the needs of public health care, pensions, child care, seniors' needs, low cost housing and the peaceful development of the country."

To understand why the state is so committed to this sweeping reorientation of Canadian foreign policy, it is useful to review events of the past two decades.

In the early 1990s, Canada experienced a huge economic recession, exacerbated by "free trade." The comprehensive restructuring of the Canadian economy meant that some entire sectors were decimated, while some new sectors of Canadian capital emerged and grew. Globalization in general (related to huge developments in technology) was on the rise, sparking extensive discourse about how to reorient in order to identify and exploit new global opportunities.

But the central development at this time was the sudden, unexpected collapse of the USSR and massive geopolitical changes which followed. Huge areas of the world were now "opened up" to Western capitalism (whose members were fighting amongst themselves for key positions - for a slice of the pie). At the same time, the end of the Cold War meant the sudden loss of NATO's raison d'etre. NATO embarked on a long search for a new identity and role, taking it to the war on Yugoslavia (which, at least immediately, was a disaster in terms of consolidating Western states around a new role for the alliance).

A key moment in the "post-Soviet" era policy debates is represented by the 1999 Symposium of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is an old and extremely influential advocacy group, whose membership is made up of over 50 military organizations. It is large, well-funded and well-connected. Part of its funding comes from the Department of National Defence, so when CDA speaks, DND listens.

The 1999 symposium was focused on changing strategic assessment within the context of massive geopolitical shifts. Specifically, the symposium identified the following strategic issues:

- * the pressing need for reorientation in Canadian foreign policy (military and economic) in light of the collapse of the USSR;
- * the rise of China as a political and economic world power, a rise characterized as "the most serious challenge to Western interests in the Pacific";
- * the importance of retaining and developing NATO as a counter-balance to changing geopolitics that challenge Western interests;
- * the destabilization of the central Asian states as a strategic and economic opportunity, and specific opportunities for Canada in the vast energy reserves of the central Asian region;
- * the necessity for Canada to integrate military and economic issues within foreign policy discussions, in order to exert global influence and reap economic benefit;
- * the government of Iraq - characterized as a "rogue state" - as a barrier to securing Western interests in the central Asian region.

Virtually every one of these concerns have assumed a central place in Canadian foreign policy over the past ten years, and every one has been addressed to significant extents in the arena of the war on Afghanistan.

The Canadian state uses the war to justify, implement, test and clarify new foreign policy directions whose scope range far beyond that one country. For this reason, the stakes are critically high for a government that seeks to extend the war. By the same token, when the peace and anti-war movements confront the war in Afghanistan, we are engaged in a much more profound struggle, one that ultimately has a decisive role in determining our country's role in the world. Mobilization against the war must continue - it is the war that must end, now.

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Thursday, December 16, 2010

Peter Laarman: A Matter of Life and Debt: The Role of Religion

A Matter of Life and Debt: The Role of Religion

By Peter Laarman [article link](#)

December 13, 2010 | Religion Dispatches

Sure, the US government currently borrows too much—and eventually we will have to bring down our debt-to-GDP ratio or face a serious crisis. Point taken.

But what strikes me as painfully ironic, even tragic, at this moment of continuing economic suffering is that federal government borrowing used to maintain or create jobs and thus revive demand (a big qualifier) should really be viewed as *virtuous* debt in ethical terms. Whereas the truly odious and corrosive forms of debt, the forms that blight lives and destroy livelihoods, are hardly critiqued at all by the high-minded deficit hawks within the chattering classes, let alone by any prominent American religious leaders.

Here below—in the streamlined form of religious instruction known as the catechism—is an exercise in thinking about debt in religious terms:

Question: When and how, for members of the Abrahamic faiths, does salvation history begin?

Answer: God is moved by the suffering of a people who have been reduced to bondage—that is, sold into debt slavery—and God delivers that people out of indebtedness into a new kind of community based on freedom from debt peonage.

Question: How do we know this?

Answer: The voice to Moses from the burning bush declares God's identification with those dispossessed by debt. The law later given to Moses at Sinai expressly commands complete debt forgiveness at regular intervals. Even before the Sinai episode, God makes it clear through the giving of manna in the wilderness that hoarding is forbidden: that shared abundance is to be the foundation of just community. All of the Hebrew prophets rail against debt oppression (e.g., Isaiah 3:15 : "What do you mean by crushing my people—by grinding the face of the poor?").

The defining event in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth is his spectacular disruption of the oppressive banking practices taking place in the outer court (sometimes called the Gentile Court) of the Jerusalem temple: an event that ensures Jesus will be bound over for trial and quickly eliminated. Everything that Jesus and Paul say about God speaks to God's surpassing generosity and thus to the need for God-followers to be similarly generous: to release debtors and forgive debt.

Islam further intensifies the Abrahamic condemnation of moneylending; Muslims and Muslim cultures maintain to this day an alternative system of interest-free banking.

Question: But why this religious obsession with debt? Debt is just a tool for doing business, right? And don't the economists tell us that credit makes the world go round?

Answer: Because almost without exception debt reduces both the wealth and the freedom or capacity of the debtor. Debt frequently leads to physical and psychological violence against borrowers who cannot pay. Borrowed money may look and feel a lot like real money, but it is simply money that has been rented for a fee. It might buy the borrower a little time, but it almost always costs the borrower more than its use value can justify. The only exceptions to this rule of diminishment: (a) borrowing by shrewd businesses that can make a higher rate of business profit than the rate of interest they must pay on their debt, and (b) microcredit schemes that can sometimes nurture itty-bitty businesses in very poor societies.

Question: Well, that's all very nice. But take Americans' credit cards away and watch how the economy collapses completely. Is that what you want?

Answer: All that the credit cards are doing now is concealing the extent of a collapse that has already happened. We need to find our way back, slowly but steadily, to sustainability and just community. We could start by ensuring that the rates and fees small borrowers must pay on current debts are at least no greater than the rates that big borrowers pay. Right now we don't even do that; it's quite the reverse: our poorest and most vulnerable pay by far the highest rates, and this indecent bloodsucking—this grinding of the faces of God's poor people—will continue if the “financial services industry” succeeds in eviscerating the financial consumer protection agency that was just created under the new Dodd-Franks law.

Question: Why do you use quotation marks for “financial services industry”? That is so demeaning!

Answer: Because in religious terms the misnaming a form of oppression contributes to the oppression. And there is no way that our American usurers, especially the providers of payday loans and the predatory credit card issuers, can be said to be providing a “service” to those whom they entrap in an endless debt cycle. The mortgage “servicers” are equally if not more rapacious: they just love to keep delinquent and anxious home borrowers in limbo while they extract rich delinquent fees. They often mislead borrowers about possible remedies, then suddenly seize the property (and collect even more fees) with no warning.

Question: And is there not an even more insidious dimension to the finance sector and its growing role?

Answer: Yes, there is a too-little-noticed cancerous dimension. The burgeoning finance sector (which now reaps more than a fourth of annual US business profits; 25 years ago it took in just a seventh of the total) contributes almost nothing to the real economy—to the production of good and services—and in many ways it has been ravaging the real economy for the past 40 years in the manner of a cancer or tape worm: think of all the leveraged buyouts in which the assets are pillaged and the workers sent home.

The financial sector is also a cancer on our politics, spending vastly more money to buy votes in Congress than any other sector except (wait for it!) the health care industry. The cancer metastasizes because of the outsize profits and pay in the finance sector: 60 percent higher than in other sectors requiring equivalent levels of training and skill. All that talk that you hear from Wall Street and its political and media enablers about how finance promotes efficiency and innovation is so much self-serving eyewash: the historical record shows that the US economy was far more dynamic and innovative before the finance sector went on steroids—back when interest rates were limited by law and bank practices were strictly regulated.

Question: All right. But aren't these weighty systemic questions better left to experts and economists? We religious folk have a lot of other issues to worry about—issues that we are more competent to address.

Answer: Actually, just about all of the issues that we religious folk insist we really care about—issues like world poverty and hunger, resource wars and environmental degradation, human trafficking, widening domestic inequality, shrinking access to quality higher education, declining on-time graduation rates for low-income students and students of color, urban neighborhood blight, stress-related health problems, declining family life and domestic violence—are directly related to systemic debt oppression.

If the most urgent moral question of the 20th century was the question of color line, perhaps an equally urgent moral question for the 21st century is the debt line—a line not at all unrelated to ongoing race-based oppression.

We can mumble and fumble our way around the edges of this, or we can be true to the burning core of our spiritual inheritance (cf. Exodus 3 on flammable divine indignation over debt peonage) and say clearly and consistently whose side we are on.

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Wednesday, December 15, 2010

[**Gilbert Mercier: The American Empire Is Collapsing, And Americans Will Be The Last to Know**](#)

The American Empire Is Collapsing, And Americans Will Be The Last to Know

By Gilbert Mercier [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 15, 2010 | News Junkie Post | AlterNet

50 years from now historians will probably be writing about the fall of the American empire. But history is writing itself furiously in the present, accelerated by the revolution of global freedom of information. What would have taken years to unlikely gather is accessible to anyone with a few strokes on a computer keyboard. So never mind the historians of the future, and lets see how reality is shaping up today.

The crumbling period of the [United States empire started on September 11th](#). Since then, a chain of events so dire occurred that it would seem the empire defeated itself by a series of catastrophic mistakes. After 9/11, Americans wanted revenge, and the war in Afghanistan became a very easy sale for the Bush administration. But then the neo-cons seized the opportunity to push their agenda of the New American Century project, and it was precisely the Achille's heel of the empire.

Attacking Iraq: The Biggest Geopolitical Blunder In History

When the Bush administration attacked Iraq in 2003, a critical element escaped their understanding of the regional and demographic parameters: By toppling the Sunni regime of Saddam Hussein, they would give the upper hand to the oppressed Shia Iraqi majority allied with Iran.

In a word, the US troops who fought and died in the conflict did it ultimately for the regional benefit of the Iranian Islamic Republic. The blunders did not stop with geopolitics, but were compounded by a catastrophic financial burden.

The Cost Of Wars in Iraq And Afghanistan Is Bankrupting The US Economy

If the Pentagon was a corporation, it would be the largest in the world. The curiously called, Department Of Defense, costs the American taxpayers, since the ill advised attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, around \$700 billion a year. Of course, if you add up health care for wounded veterans, and layers of new "security" administration such as the Department of Homeland Security, the numbers keep adding up to top \$1 trillion a year. Overall more than 25 percent of the federal budget gets swallowed in the financial black hole that is the Pentagon.

If Americans could do the math, they would quickly understand that the bill for the two wars is now creeping up to \$10 trillion. In order to achieve the chimeric goals of the neocons of an ever lasting global American empire money had to be borrowed. Currently, for every dollar spent by the federal government 40 cents is borrowed. America used to borrow mainly from Japan and Europe. but now does its main borrowing from China. In a striking reversal of fortune, the “poor man of Asia” has now become the country in the world with the most liquid assets.

Empires Always Have An Expiration Date

Americans have a delusional sense of historic exceptionalism which they share with most previous empires. After all America’s ascension to a leading role on the world scene is very recent. The deal was sealed in Yalta in 1945 between Stalin and Roosevelt, with Churchill present but already taking the back seat. In a matter of 5 years, and about 60 million deaths, two new empires had emerged from the ruin of three: the United States and the Soviet Union. On the losing side of history was, of course, Japan, the empire of the sun, but also Britain and France.

The old imperial powers of Britain and France were slow to fully understand the nature of the new game. It took the loss of India for the United Kingdom, in 1948, and the one of Indochina for France in 1951 to make them understand that they would have from now on an ever shrinking role on the world stage. However, it took 9 years for Britain and France to fully digest the consequences of Yalta. In 1956, France and Britain took their very last joint imperialist venture by attacking Egypt over the ownership of the Suez Canal. The decaying empires were told to back off by the United States and the USSR.

A Repressive Capitalist Globalization Or The Revolution Of Global Freedom Of Information?

The Cold War was a fairly predictable era. Beside a few crisis such as the flash point of the Cuba missile crisis, the two super-powers fought to augment their respective turfs through proxy wars. But Afghanistan came along for the Soviets, and the long war made the USSR collapsed. Naturally the United States started acting as the only super-power left, and for this reason as the master of the universe.

The narrative of Ronald Reagan is peppered by such elements, and so is the one of all of his successors including Barack Obama. But all empires had the same distorted visions of themselves, the Romans imposed the Pax Romana on their vassals for a long time, so did Charlemagne, and Napoleon for a much shorter time. In any sense, power is cyclical and never lasts.

Thanks to WikiLeaks and the courage of its founder Julian Assange and the one of Pentagon’s whistleblower Bradley Manning, it has become rather obvious that while President Obama has changed the official tone of Washington from the Bush administration, the overall goals of US foreign policies have remained the same: Ensure and expend US power and authority on vassal states. This push to establish a new world order under exclusive US authority has been prevalent in all of the US administrations since Ronald Reagan and the end of the cold war.

President Obama, despite what could be his personal convictions is a prisoner of this imperial system. Obama is trapped by a complex nexus of inter-locking institutions such as the Pentagon, the CIA, the State Department etc, and by powerful interest groups profiting from endless wars. The very same institutions and interest groups have been at the core of every post-1945 imperial presidency. As early as 1946, president Harry Truman said: *“From Darius’ Persia, Alexander’s Greece, Hadrian’s Rome, Victoria’s Britain; no nation or group of nations has had our responsibilities.”*

However, most analysts and foreign policy experts currently assume that the present century will not be American. In this tectonic power shift, under the push of China and India, the emerging new world order will be plural and decentralized. But the main question is: How Americans will adapt to this new paradigm where the United States loses its status of uncontested leadership?

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Randall Amster: Support the Dominant Paradigm

Support the Dominant Paradigm

by Randall Amster [article link](#)

December 15, 2010 | CommonDreams

There's a bumper sticker still clinging to the back of my old camper, bearing a phrase you've probably heard before or perhaps even uttered: "Subvert the Dominant Paradigm." At the time I'd placed this on the tailgate for display, it made perfect sense to me. The Dominant Paradigm was the one manufactured by the warmongers, corporateers, securitizers, and mediamen. The rest of us were living in a Subordinate Paradigm, and the path to our salvation lay in tearing down the one imposing itself upon us. Since those halcyon bumper-sticker days, however, I've come to see that this logic is actually inverted, and that in fact WE are the Dominant Paradigm while those ostensibly in charge are the ones who continually attempt to subvert it.

This seems counterintuitive, of course. The world is wired by powerful interests who have propped themselves up by virtue of a nascent "corp d'etat" in which the policies and practices established at the upper echelons serve only to increase their wealth and privilege at the expense of the masses. The billionaires buoy themselves with bailouts, tax breaks, and subsidized boondoggles. They loot the treasury in the name of national security, capitalize on and/or foment dubious threats in order to justify their lockstep control, and interpose Big Brother mechanisms in all spheres of society so as to maintain this ineluctable combination of security and control. Ideologically, they utilize their wholly-owned media subsidiaries and increasingly-regimented school systems to produce a society of dampened consumers with little more on their minds than titillating toys, prescribed pills, and faster faux-food.

Nevertheless, it is increasingly apparent that the forces of subjugation are on the wrong side of history, and are by far a minority class on the planet. They've convinced us that we matter little while their every move is newsworthy. It's a sublime illusion, one that we've been paid a relatively handsome sum (compared to most of history's denizens) to swallow. Over time, it has even come to appear that this stratified state of affairs is the natural order of things, and thus have we generally accepted the rightful status of inherited wealth as a precondition of political power. Democracy has been rendered a quaint exercise in which we are asked to select which robber baron will loot our resources, which moral entrepreneur will pander to us, and which corporate elitist will decide our fates. What makes this openly fascistic enterprise unique in history is precisely its transparent quality and the ways in which it exists alongside popular conceptions of liberty and justice for all. We don't require leaks to expose this blatant corporatocracy; the empire brazenly stands stark naked before our gerrymandered gaze.

Against this state of affairs, people the world over launch rebellions and insurrections of every possible kind. Some openly resist with their bodies, others deploy the power of the pen, still others practice slow-downs and other forms of subtle sabotage, and many raise their voices in response to the myriad injustices delivered on our doorsteps every day. The number of people protesting unconscionable wars, corporate globalization pacts, and other shady deals almost always outstrips the number of those enacting the policies in question. At every turn it is obvious that we are many, and they are few -- but the design of the world is a pyramid scheme, where the masses comprising the foundation often feel weak despite shouldering the weight of the freeloading "cloud minders" cavorting in the ether while their wastes trickle down on us.

More than half a century ago, the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills cogently described the workings of this burgeoning "power elite" in terms that in retrospect seem like a feat of gifted insight. Mills depicted a ruling class of military, corporate, and political figures who perpetuate their stations by rendering the citizenry effectively powerless and subject to ready manipulation. Part of the inspiration for his seminal work was a 1942 book called Behemoth that chronicled the

Nazis' rise to power, which Mills later said provided him with the "tools to grasp and analyze the entire total structure and as a warning of what could happen in a modern capitalist democracy." The basic thesis of *The Power Elite* is that a highly unified and centralized elite class has monopolized power, rendered democracy a charade, and coopted the ideologies of both conservatism and liberalism to serve the preordained continuance of their rule. Mills' insights echoed a prior account of these trends by John F. Hylan, New York City mayor, in 1922:

"The real menace of our republic is this invisible government which like a giant octopus sprawls its slimy length over city, State and nation. Like the octopus of real life it operates under cover of a self-created screen. It seizes in its long and powerful tentacles our executive officers, our legislative bodies, our schools, our courts, our newspapers and every agency created for the public protection. It squirms in the jaws of darkness and thus is the better able to clutch the reins of government, secure enactment of the legislation favorable to corrupt business, violate the law with impunity, smother the press and reach into the courts.

"To depart from mere generalizations, let me say that at the head of this octopus are the Rockefeller-Standard Oil interests and a small group of powerful banking houses generally referred to as the international bankers. The little coterie of powerful international bankers virtually run the United States Government for their own selfish purposes. They practically control both parties, write political platforms, make catspaws of party leaders, use the leading men of private organizations and resort to every device to place in nomination for high public office only such candidates as will be amenable to the dictates of corrupt big business. They connive at centralization of government on the theory that a small group of hand-picked, privately controlled individuals in power can be more easily handled than a larger group among whom there will most likely be men sincerely interested in public welfare.

"These international bankers and Rockefeller-Standard Oil interests control the majority of newspapers and magazines in this country. They use the columns of these papers to club into submission or drive out of office public officials who refuse to do the bidding of the powerful corrupt cliques which compose the invisible government. It operates under cover of a self-created screen [and] seizes our executive officers, legislative bodies, schools, courts, newspapers and every agency created for the public protection."

Others have similarly pointed out the hijacked nature of governance and the lockstep union of corporate, political, and military interests -- from William Jennings Bryan to Dwight David Eisenhower -- and in all of these formulations it is understood that the ruling class is numerically very small, a "little coterie" as Hylan described it. The paradigm in which they operate is a mere fiction plied by a self-perpetuating cadre who claim the mantle of power in order to preempt the exercise of actual power by "the people." Their worldview is designed to insulate their interests from contestation by reinforcing at every turn a sense of resignation among the masses, who are provided with just enough "bread and circuses" to keep their place in the misguided but well-publicized notion that "you can't fight city hall." In this sense, the so-called Dominant Paradigm is actually a wholly contrived and artificially induced version of reality.

The real Dominant Paradigm -- the one held by the overwhelming majority of people on the planet -- is more decentralized and amorphous, yet is grounded in shared values that merit enunciation. These include: a belief in the virtues of community; a desire to be part of something greater than oneself; a reciprocal relationship with nature and life's essential resources; an aversion to open hostilities and devastating warfare; an interest in the wellbeing of others as a precondition of personal prosperity; an adherence to culturally-transcendent principles such as the Golden Rule; and a willingness to work hard in return for an equitable existence. Remarkably, this truly Dominant Paradigm continues to proliferate despite attempts to manipulate and eradicate it, and despite the fact that its practicability is highly disincentivized in modern life. It is perpetually being subverted by the "power elite" through the interlocking devices of politics, media, education, and economics -- and yet it continually emerges from the heart of humanity like green grass poking through the cracks of a lifeless concrete jungle.

At this juncture, the true Dominant Paradigm desperately needs our open encouragement, thoughtful attention, and unconditional support. If humankind is to find its collective way through the storm in a world seemingly gone mad with avarice and despoliation, it will take nothing short of a total paradigm shift -- back to the one from whence we came and, by some miracle of persistence in the face of persecution, in many respects have never really abandoned.

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[Stephan Salisbury: Terrorama](#)

Terrorama: The Next Congress Will See Terror in Everything

by Stephan Salisbury [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 15, 2010 by TomDispatch | CommonDreams

There are some things to be thankful for.

The woman who [puzzled over](#) Hispanics in her audience of high-school students and suggested they looked “Asian” was defeated in her run for the Senate in Nevada. The guy who [called Islam](#) a cult was knocked out of the Kentucky gubernatorial race. The bizarre candidate who [threatened](#) to “take out” a reporter was brushed aside in his bid for the governorship of New York.

Despite the electoral failures of Sharron Angle, Ron Ramsey, Carl Paladino, and a host of others inhabiting what used to be America’s political peripheries, the next Congress will have a decidedly fringy tone. No wonder the wilder types already there are looking forward to the January 2011 legislative session with such relish: so many investigations crying out to be launched; so many dictators and thugs still hanging on in Cuba, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela; [terrorism](#) in the streets of Portland; foreign terrorists flocking to America; secret government documents splayed across the front pages of our newspapers.

They wonder if the U.S. hasn’t simply become a pitiful, helpless giant. But the rest of us ought to wonder just what kind of politics is going to grow in the strange, rich Petri dish of the new Congress.

Consider just one area that will be a major focus of Congressional interest: immigration, an issue that will gain potency as it melds into the rhetoric of terror.

Foreigners and terrorists: Really, what’s the difference? That the nation has grown and prospered precisely because of adaptive immigration is beside the point, an obvious reflection of someone caught in the old mindset of the September 10th world. Interestingly, though, only about [8%](#) of those who cast ballots in the 2010 election cited immigration concerns as their primary motivator. Of those who did, however, nearly 70% were Republicans.

With their new House majority, the Republicans plan to pay some major attention to that 8% of the motivated electorate. Immigration matters will play out largely in two key House committees, Homeland Security and Judiciary, and critical members of each committee told me they intend to investigate past actions of the Obama administration “fully and completely,” block any kind of comprehensive immigration reform, expose supposed lax enforcement of immigration laws and inadequate resources devoted to -- as one Judiciary member put it -- “boots on the ground.” Terrorism will play a key role in hearings on virtually all these topics, most dramatically, no doubt, in focusing attention on what Republicans view as a shadowy Latin network of terrorist infiltrators seeking to exploit the U.S. failure to protect its own southern border.

Most people are probably blissfully unaware of a burgeoning conspiracy in which Cuba and Venezuela are reputedly assisting African and Middle Eastern extremists as they slip into the United States and fan out across the country. That lack of awareness will not last long, however, if the new Republican majority in the House has anything to do with it. Key representatives are already promising to pound the drums ever more loudly and so expose this supposed burst of clandestine activity over the next couple of years. More on that in a moment.

Peter King, vocal New York Republican opponent of the Lower Manhattan Islamic cultural center, aka [the mosque at Ground Zero](#), will soon become chair of the Homeland Security Committee. He has made it all too clear that he intends to “investigate” with abandon and continue to bird-dog that dreaded Manhattan “mosque.” King’s focus will serve to keep the

specter of imminent terrorism directly before the country, infusing all manner of issues with claims and insinuations about bombs, plots, and massive threats.

He has made it [no secret](#) that he wants hearings on the administration's failure to put more money into protecting New York City from the threat of nuclear terrorism, on what kinds of screw-ups led to the [Fort Hood shootings](#) last year, and on what King views as the Obama administration's unconscionable plans to close Guantanamo and the Justice Department's plans to hold 9/11-related trials in New York civilian courts. (That neither of these "plans" is exactly at the top of the Obama agenda anymore won't matter a bit.)

King is a firm believer in Fortress America, too: in the creation, above all, of an impregnable fence along the border with Mexico. For want of such a fence, the nation's "homeland security" will, he insists, be eternally "at risk," as he [wrote](#) Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano in a joint letter with Darrell Issa, the California congressman who will conduct his own set of investigations as new chair of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

King sees Islam as virtually synonymous with violent extremism and, during last summer's raging controversy over whether Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's proposed Manhattan Islamic center should be built, he [called for](#) an investigation of its funders. (In fact, there are, as yet, no funders.) Now, developers of the Islamic center -- called Park51 -- are seeking public economic development funds aimed at blighted downtown Manhattan. King doesn't like that either. "It's an affront to the memory of all those who were murdered on 9/11," he [insists](#). "This shows a gross insensitivity to the most fundamental feelings of New Yorkers and to those murdered on 9/11 it is a slap in the face that is a terrible insult."

That Islam can be linked to terrorism is a no-brainer for the congressman and many other conservatives and Republicans. This same thinking has now infected the controversy over WikiLeaks. Why not, King [wonders](#), label the largely volunteer WikiLeaks group a terrorist organization, thus facilitating seizure of its assets and arrests of anyone remotely associated with it, including presumably readers? Tom Flanagan, a former aide to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, has gone one step further, offering an idea that Republican leaders and conservative commentators appear to find appealing. Flanagan has [proposed](#) assassination as the fate for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Sarah Palin seems to agree. In a note on Facebook, she likened WikiLeaks to al-Qaeda. Of Assange, she [wrote](#), "He is an anti-American operative with blood on his hands. His past posting of classified documents revealed the identity of more than 100 Afghan sources to the Taliban. Why was he not pursued with the same urgency we pursue al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders?" (There is, in fact, no evidence whatsoever that Assange has "blood on his hands.")

This violent thinking has spread like the Ebola virus through conservative circles. William Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, typically wants to know why Assange and his colleagues have not been "[neutralized](#)" by the U.S. government. Mike Huckabee, a former governor as well as past and possibly future Republican presidential candidate, suggests those associated with the leaks get the [death penalty](#) -- but only after fair trials. "Any lives they endangered, they're personally responsible for and the blood is on their hands," he said. (One wonders why there is such a focus on bloody hands in the Republican Party.)

All Issues Are Terrorism Issues

What should be increasingly clear is that Republican members of the incoming Congress are looking for terrorism in ever more startling places. In fact, it seems that, for them, all domestic issues are potentially terrorist issues, perhaps none more so than immigration. Even in the current lame-duck session of Congress, their unsettling rhetoric has enswathed immigration in such claims. Take the debate over the Dream Act, which would provide an avenue to citizenship via military service or college attendance for foreign-born young people brought to this country at a young age by their undocumented immigrant parents.

Steve King, the Iowa Republican who will chair the Judiciary Committee's immigration subcommittee, [has been deriding](#) the DREAM Act as a "special amnesty program [and] affirmative action program for illegals." Should it become law, he warns of a day when student "illegals" would find themselves "sitting in the classroom next to... a widow or a widower or a son or a daughter of someone who has lost their life in Iraq or Afghanistan defending our liberty and our freedom."

Senator Jeff Sessions, Alabama Republican, goes King one better, [suggesting](#) that the DREAM Act could well pave the way for another 9/11 plotted by those "from the dangerous regions of the Middle East."

Former San Diego mayor Roger Hedgecock, now a popular, nationally syndicated conservative talk radio show host, [claims](#) the DREAM Act is par for the course "in an era when the Obama regime considers terrorists citizens and citizens suspects -- when Jesus' birth is considered myth, but Obama's birth is gospel."

Steve King believes up to four million illegal immigrants a year are piling into the United States. These, he told me, add up to a “huge human haystack” composed of “vicious, violent criminals” and an unknown number of *bona fide* terrorists.

“As a sovereign nation, we must control our borders,” King [argues](#). “We must ensure that terrorists do not infiltrate the United States. We must tighten and strengthen border control efforts so that illegal aliens and drug smugglers do not enter our country.” A building contractor back home in Iowa, King has even [designed](#) a border fence to show how easily the country could staunch the tide of “illegals” from Mexico and, of course, the terrorists among them. “We do this with livestock all the time,” he explained, as he described the fence to me.

Terrorists at the Door

The idea that terrorists are probing the southern border in the guise of immigrants has recently become part and parcel of Republican border-policy mythology. Michael McCaul, Texas Republican and current ranking minority member of the homeland security intelligence subcommittee, told me that “the border is going to be a focus” of extensive congressional investigation. “Who is coming into the country?” he wondered rhetorically in our conversation and added, “There is a massive tide of immigration without control.”

Among those furtively crossing the southern border, McCaul believes, are an unknown number of terrorist operatives. This past year, he notes, authorities [arrested](#) Anthony Tracy, an American Muslim, and charged him with assisting nearly 300 undocumented Somalis in entering the United States. Tracy told U.S. authorities that a Cuban official in Africa helped provide papers for the immigrants, enabling them to reach Mexico. From there, the Somalis crossed over the southern U.S. border and have now vanished.

Conservative pundits and some media outlets have [made much](#) of this, suggesting members of al-Shabaab, the Somali terrorist group, are now roaming the American countryside. But there is [no tangible evidence](#) that any member of al-Shabaab entered the country with Tracy’s help, according to an immigration spokeswoman.

McCaul said the Somali case and how the Obama administration let it happen would be a key topic in hearings in which he and other Republicans will demand answers. The real question is: Did it happen at all? Immigration authorities have not only been unable to find members of al-Shabaab who entered the country from the southern border -- with or without Tracy’s help -- they haven’t been able to locate any of them the 300 supposed Somalis at all.

The federal judge trying the case, U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema of the Eastern District of Virginia, dubbed it “shaky” at Tracy’s trial. Absent any smuggled Somalis, she [pointed out](#), the government was unable to prove anything. Given the presence of [informers at the center](#) of so many terrorism prosecutions since 9/11, it should come as no surprise that Tracy has a long and mysterious past as an informer for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency and possibly the Drug Enforcement Administration as well. What that means in the Somali case remains unclear. It is, however, clear that Tracy served only a four-month federal sentence in the incident and is now chatting up authorities.

Keep in mind that murkiness is a useful political tool. It will certainly be the stuff of upcoming congressional hearings, which will echo the endless rounds of anti-communist hearings that dominated Washington in the heyday of the House Un-American Activities Committee and similar panels in the 1950s. What can’t be seen must be feared, and in the confused darkness, passionate certainty grows.

In that murky vein, Republicans also [hope to expose](#) the links they see among Iran, Hezbollah, and Latin American lands, especially Venezuela. Right-wing commentators and military analysts assert Hezbollah is [increasingly active](#) in the Colombian drug trade, is working with Mexican drug cartels, and has ties to Venezuelan authorities.

Rep. Sue Myrick of North Carolina, a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, has been increasingly vocal in denouncing Hezbollah’s reputed march toward the Rio Grande. [Earlier this year](#), she shared her concerns with the Department of Homeland Security. Within weeks, Mexico reported that it had broken up Hezbollah operations, although what “Hezbollah” was actually doing, if anything, is difficult to say.

Nevertheless, the talk of Hezbollah on the border has grown crazily since the supposed arrest of Jameel Nasr, described in second- and third-hand news accounts as a “Hezbollah operative” in the border city of Tijuana, Mexico. This arrest, initially reported in July by a Kuwaiti newspaper, has not only not been confirmed, but Homeland Security officials [insist](#) that they have no “credible information” of any terror groups on the southern border.

That apparently is not good enough for the American right-wing. They prefer to follow one of the primary laws of the post-9/11 world: whatever can be imagined is in fact true. What “could be” invariably trumps what “is.” Is it possible that supporters of Hezbollah are plotting terror attacks from bases in Tijuana? Of course it is, therefore it must be so.

Could Somalis be lining up to travel to Cuba, Mexico, and Texas? It is possible, as so much is possible, therefore it must be so. A corollary to this law is that if a falsehood or rumor is repeated often enough, it becomes so. Hence, Jameel Nasr, Hezbollah operative, who may not even exist, actually was arrested as he plotted terrorist operations for Hezbollah just south of Texas.

A more realistic appraisal of Muslim activity in Latin America comes from an overlooked WikiLeaks document, a classified cable from the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which describes “the unique possibilities for Muslim engagement” with the U.S. in that country. Writing at the end of 2009, the consul reported that there were some Hezbollah supporters among recent Lebanese immigrants to Brazil. (That in itself is hardly surprising since Hezbollah is a popular, deeply rooted political movement that controls significant parts of southern Lebanon.)

The consul also informed Washington that such immigrants were surprisingly few in number and were completely overshadowed by the country’s mainstream Muslim leaders, who have exhibited a keen interest in and curiosity about the United States, and are opposed to extremist ideologies of any kind. These leaders, he wrote, are eager “to engage, acutely aware of the dangers of radicalism, and had solid achievements in integrating Muslim and Brazilian identities, making them an excellent example of how a unique MMC [Muslim minority community] has, by and large, carved out a positive space within a diverse Latin American country.” In other words, in the real world, the vast majority of Muslims in Latin America are eager for the same kind of stability and engagement as Muslims in the U.S.

But this view -- and the importance it places on dialogue -- does not fit the prevailing nativist mythology in this country or Republican and right-wing efforts to meld terrorism, Islam, and immigration into a single muddy brew (a characteristic of much public debate in the U.S. since 9/11). It appears we have entered a post-analytic world where the point of public discourse is not to make distinctions but to obliterate them.

A tiny group of radical extremists, mostly from Saudi Arabia, have become indistinguishable from a billion and a half Muslims all over the world. A bizarre and convoluted ideology, worked out to justify specific attacks on the U.S. and Egypt, has come to stand in for Islamic sacred texts and holy law. The [roughly 50](#) al-Qaeda fighters remaining in Afghanistan have become a synecdoche for the whole of the Muslim Middle East and South Asia.

Political dissenters in the United States have [been absorbed](#) into the terrorism trope as well. Information -- which is, after all, what has been disseminated by WikiLeaks -- is increasingly viewed as a potential terrorist weapon. Absorbing that information (that is, reading the documents) could even amount to material support for terrorism. In such a world, the counter-terrorism efforts of the U.S. government are trained on the entire civilian population, whether through electronic monitoring or [fiddling](#) with everyone’s junk.

Former attorney general John Ashcroft [noted](#) the importance of blurring all distinctions years ago. “In this new war, our enemy's platoons infiltrate our borders, quietly blending in with visiting tourists, students, and workers,” he proclaimed in June 2002. “They move unnoticed through our cities, neighborhoods, and public spaces. They wear no uniforms. Their camouflage is not forest green, but rather it is the color of common street clothing. Their tactics rely on evading recognition at the border and escaping detection within the United States. Their terrorist mission is to defeat America, destroy our values and kill innocent people.”

It’s all right there, hidden in plain sight. Terrorists are Muslims, Muslims are immigrants, immigrants are residents. Around it goes. Increasingly, immigration enforcement is becoming an anti-terrorism effort. Anyone and everyone is a suspect. That is the reality played out at every airport; it is the narrative touched by every monitored email and tapped telephone call.

We are a fearful nation eating away at itself and the wolves are prowling the southern borders. Welcome to Congress, 2011.

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Stephan Salisbury is cultural writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer. His most recent book is [Mohamed's Ghosts: An American Story of Love and Fear in the Homeland](#). To listen to Timothy MacBain's latest TomCast audio interview in which Stephan Salisbury discusses the terror dreams of a nostalgic empire, [click here](#) or, to download it to your iPod, [here](#).

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The Lew Rockwell Show

179. [The Espionage Act and the Death of American Freedoms](#)

Naomi Wolf warns Lew Rockwell listeners that TSA and Wikileaks are Master-Slave fights, not Left-Right.

A deeply worried Naomi Wolf, author of *The End of America*, fears that both TSA actions and the threatened use of the 1917 Espionage Act against Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, a journalist, signal a rapid escalation on multiple fronts toward the end of liberty for all of us. Historically, the state always uses the excuse of national security as a tactic to subjugate citizens, forcing nakedness and sexual intrusions upon us, unless and until, courageous acts of resistance and mass opposition finally force these totalitarians, like the TSA, to back down. But we must act if we are to have a chance.

The Lew Rockwell Show [home page](#)

Espionage Act: How The Government Can Engage In Serious Aggression Against The People Of The United States

by Naomi Wolf [article link](#)

December 11, 2010 | MMr

Terrorist by Association

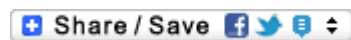
The Justice Department targets nonviolent solidarity activists

by Jeremy Gantz [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 14, 2010 | In These Times | ICH

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:54 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Tuesday, December 14, 2010

[Linda McQuaig: Vindication for G20 Protesters](#)

Vindication for G20 Protesters

by Linda McQuaig [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 14, 2010 | The Toronto Star | CommonDreams | Rabble

In the aftermath of the G20 fiasco here last summer, one thing Torontonians agreed on was that such summits should be held in isolated venues — on military bases, on ocean-going vessels, on melting glaciers — anywhere but where lots of people reside.

But beyond being upset with the expense and disorder that weekend, many Torontonians (and city council) sided with the police, assuming that the arrest of 1,105 people must have somehow been justified, given the rampage of a small group through the downtown core.

What is now unmistakably clear — with the release of a searing report by Ontario Ombudsman André Marin and startling new video evidence of police beatings obtained by the Star's Rosie DiManno — is that the vast powers of the state were unjustifiably used against thousands of innocent protesters, as well as against others doing nothing more subversive than riding a bike or picking up groceries.

Unbeknownst to citizens who had gathered for a peaceful march through downtown Toronto — similar to marches frequently held without incident in the city — the provincial cabinet had resurrected police powers from the 70-year-old Public Works Protection Act, enacted when the country was at war with Nazi Germany.

This, according to Marin, triggered “extravagant police authority” which the police went on to exercise outside the intended area, leaving citizens vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and detention far from the G20, and creating “the most massive compromise of civil liberties in Canadian history.”

If one were trying to dream up scenarios of overarching police powers, it would be hard to invent anything more lurid than the real-life tale of police yanking the prosthetic leg off 57-year-old Revenue Canada employee John Pruyn, after he was unable to move quickly enough from the designated Queen’s Park “speech area” where he was sitting with his daughter.

The war measures powers only compounded the problem created by the massive police presence assembled by the federal government. Harry Glasbeek, professor emeritus at Osgoode Hall Law School, notes that, with almost 20,000 police to monitor some 10,000 demonstrators, there were two “guardians of the peace” for every unarmed demonstrator.

All this not only alerts us to the dangers of creeping authoritarianism, but amounts to a vindication of the demonstrators, who were often dismissed as troublemakers.

On the contrary, we need more these sorts of citizens, who take seriously the notion that dissent is essential to freedom, because it keeps political leaders in check.

Indeed, while police were arresting the one-legged man on the lawn at Queen’s Park, a few kilometres away the G20 leaders were quietly scrapping a proposed tax on financial speculation, promoting an agenda of austerity, and generally assuring that the horrendous costs of the financial crisis would be paid for by the world’s citizens — not by the banks that brought it on.

The important role of protesters — so well appreciated by iconic Western thinkers like John Stuart Mill — is denigrated these days, perhaps because it fits uneasily with our society’s narrative about everyone being driven purely by greed and self-interest.

We seem to have trouble understanding people willing to spend hours marching in protests without the slightest prospect of personal gain, just a commitment to justice.

Instead, oddly, we accept as normal governments that squander \$1 billion on “security,” turning the country’s largest city into a pseudo war zone and locking up hundreds of its finest citizens.

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Linda McQuaig is a columnist for The Star. She is the author of [It's the Crude, Dude: War, Big Oil and the Fight for the Planet](#) and [The Trouble With Billionaires](#).

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Toews denies role in G20 police law

CBC's Louise Elliott [article link](#)
December 8, 2010 | CBC

G20 police rule slammed by ombudsman

CBC's Mike Crawley [article link](#)
December 7, 2010 | CBC

Toronto police chief retracts G20 video comments

CBC [article link](#)
December 3, 2010 | CBC

G20 probe slammed by Toronto police chief

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G20 review will probe use of police force

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November 4, 2010 | CBC

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The Ontario ombudsman's G20 report confirms the denial of our civil liberties

by Sarah Jean Harrison [article link](#)

December 14, 2010 | Rabble

Vindication.

That's what the Ontario ombudsman's Andre Marin's report sounds like to me.

As a peaceful protester during the G20 demonstrations, I saw and experienced Toronto as a police state where the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms no longer applied. While the mainstream media couldn't tear the cameras away from burning cruisers, police officers were conducting illegal searches, used excessive force and the provincial government quietly withdrew our rights.

Of all the piece-meal inquiries and investigations looking into spending and security around the G20, Caught in the Act, Andre Marin's scathing report of the provincial government and police conduct, is the first to honestly acknowledge what thousands of peaceful protestors experienced that weekend: our civil liberties, those rules we thought shaped citizenship, were trashed.

Marin's discussion of the Public Works Protection Act raises a number of very disturbing questions. The original document was a "war measures act" that was created in 1939, shortly after Canada declared war on Germany. What does it mean when a war measures act can be re-hashed without our knowledge or consent? What does it mean when the government feels it's acting in our best interests to revamp a 71-year-old act that pre-dates the Charter of Rights by 43 years?

Perhaps it means that by agreeing to enact this measure, during what we have traditionally understood as a peacetime, the government (and Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair) is suggesting that hosting an international summit is the equivalent to being at war.

And maybe they're right.

Similar to a military, the G20 doesn't work according to democratic practices. A hierarchy of a few select leaders are afforded the power to make decisions and issue directives for the majority of the world. The top brass outline the plan while populations, some more than others, are expected to execute the orders.

Like war, the policies of the G20 have collateral damage. The "fiscal consolidation" urged by the G20 have translated into the austerity measures we are now seeing in places like the UK, Ireland and Greece. The G20's unrealistic and unrelenting adherence to unlimited economic growth has consistently required deep cuts in social services which, at street level, is essentially a war waged against the poor and marginalized.

To fight a war, one of the main requirements of any government is to effectively repress all forms of dissent, especially at home. This is why our "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression," "freedom of peaceful assembly," "the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure," and "the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned," as protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms since 1982, were not adhered to on that now infamous weekend in June.

So the provincial government changed the rules, at the request of Chief Blair, and attempted to quietly dismantle our rights. In effect, the war was brought to the citizens and demonstrators of Fortress Toronto via illegal searches, falsely interpreted laws, rubber bullets, tear gas, kettlings, mass arrests and arbitrary beatings.

Thankfully we haven't turned away from this unexpected war.

Despite the heavy-handed policing that attempted to scare people off the streets and into silence, thousands refused to ignore the suspension of our rights. Thousands decided that dissent is a valuable means of protecting our rights and freedoms.

It is through protest we are able to speak back to institutions like the G20, Toronto Police Services and the provincial government. It is through protest that we indicate our non-compliance with abuse of power, intimidation tactics and injustice. It is through protest that we oppose the G20's wars.

The hundreds of complaints, photos, videos and statements protestors provided were the foundation upon which Marin could build his report. Without our presence on the streets taking photos, filming, recording and uploading, the denial of our Charter rights could have easily slipped into the past. Especially with Chief Blair working so hard to withhold information, dismiss the illegality of the supposed five-metre law (which never existed) and attempting to discredit activists' accusations of excessive force.

The worst thing we can do is collectively turn a blind eye to war, allowing its violence and injustice to fester in the dark. If we silently allow our rights to be removed, even for a weekend, we are paving the road to repetition and escalation. Marin's report is a validation of dissent as a form of political engagement. But, perhaps Marin knows this already. Hopefully his report will help educate our government.

Sarah Jean Harrison is a Toronto-based freelance writer, social justice activist, feminist, community artist and university instructor.

Rabble [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:05 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Monday, December 13, 2010

[Chris Hedges: No Act of Rebellion Is Wasted](#)

No Act of Rebellion Is Wasted

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 13, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams | Countercurrents

I stood with hundreds of thousands of rebellious Czechoslovakians in 1989 on a cold winter night in Prague's Wenceslas Square as the singer Marta Kubišová approached the balcony of the [Melantrich building](#). Kubišová had been banished from the airwaves in 1968 after the Soviet invasion for her anthem of defiance, "Prayer for Marta." Her entire catalog, including more than 200 singles, had been confiscated and destroyed by the state. She had disappeared from public view. Her voice that night suddenly flooded the square. Pressing around me were throngs of students, most of whom had not been born when she vanished. They began to sing the words of the anthem. There were tears running down their faces. It was then that I understood the power of rebellion. It was then that I knew that no act of rebellion, however futile it appears in the moment, is wasted. It was then that I knew that the Communist regime was finished.

"The people will once again decide their own fate," the crowd sang in unison with Kubišová.

I had reported on the fall of East Germany before I arrived in Prague. I would leave Czechoslovakia to cover the bloody overthrow of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. The collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe was a lesson about the long, hard road of peaceful defiance that makes profound social change possible. The rebellion in Prague, as in East Germany, was not led by the mandarins in the political class but by marginalized artists, writers, clerics, activists and intellectuals such as [Vaclav Havel](#), whom we met with most nights during the upheavals in Prague in the Magic Lantern Theater. These activists, no matter how bleak things appeared, had kept alive the possibility of justice and freedom. Their stances and protests, which took place over 40 years of Communist rule, turned them into figures of ridicule, or saw the state seek to erase them from national consciousness. They were dismissed by the pundits who controlled the airwaves as cranks, agents of foreign powers, fascists or misguided and irrelevant dreamers.

I spent a day during the [Velvet Revolution](#) with several elderly professors who had been expelled from the Romance language department at Charles University for denouncing the Soviet invasion. Their careers, like the careers of thousands of professors, teachers, artists, social workers, government employees and journalists in our own universities during the Communist witch hunts, were destroyed. After the Soviet invasion, the professors had been shipped to a remote part of Bohemia where they were forced to work on a road construction crew. They shoveled tar and graded roadbeds. And as they worked they dedicated each day to one of the languages in which they all were fluent—Latin, Greek, Italian, French, Spanish or German. They argued and fought over their interpretations of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Goethe, Proust and Cervantes. They remained intellectually and morally alive. Kubišova, who had been the most popular recording star in the country, was by then reduced to working for a factory that assembled toys. The playwright Havel was in and out of jail.

The long, long road of sacrifice, tears and suffering that led to the collapse of these regimes stretched back decades. Those who made change possible were those who had discarded all notions of the practical. They did not try to reform the Communist Party. They did not attempt to work within the system. They did not even know what, if anything, their protests would accomplish. But through it all they held fast to moral imperatives. They did so because these values were right and just. They expected no reward for their virtue; indeed they got none. They were marginalized and persecuted. And yet these poets, playwrights, actors, singers and writers finally triumphed over state and military power. They drew the good to the good. They triumphed because, however cowed and broken the masses around them appeared, their message of defiance did not go unheard. It did not go unseen. The steady drumbeat of rebellion constantly exposed the dead hand of authority and the rot and corruption of the state.

The walls of Prague were covered that chilly winter with posters depicting Jan Palach. Palach, a university student, set himself on fire in Wenceslas Square on Jan. 16, 1969, in the middle of the day to protest the crushing of the country's democracy movement. He died of his burns three days later. The state swiftly attempted to erase his act from national memory. There was no mention of it on state media. A funeral march by university students was broken up by police. Palach's gravesite, which became a shrine, saw the Communist authorities exhume his body, cremate his remains and ship them to his mother with the provision that his ashes could not be placed in a cemetery. But it did not work. His defiance remained a rallying cry. His sacrifice spurred the students in the winter of 1989 to act. Prague's Red Army Square, shortly after I left for Bucharest, was renamed Palach Square. Ten thousand people went to the dedication.

We, like those who opposed the long night of communism, no longer have any mechanisms within the formal structures of power that will protect or advance our rights. We too have undergone a coup d'état carried out not by the stone-faced leaders of a monolithic Communist Party but by the corporate state. We too have our designated pariahs, whether Ralph Nader or Noam Chomsky, and huge black holes of state-sponsored historical amnesia to make us ignore the militant movements, rebels and radical ideas that advanced our democracy. We opened up our society to ordinary people not because we deified the wisdom of the Founding Fathers or the sanctity of the Constitution. We opened it up because of communist, socialist and anarchist leaders like [Big Bill Haywood](#) and his militant unionists in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

We may feel, in the face of the ruthless corporate destruction of our nation, our culture, and our ecosystem, powerless and weak. But we are not. We have a power that terrifies the corporate state. Any act of rebellion, no matter how few people show up or how heavily it is censored by a media that caters to the needs and profits of corporations, chips away at corporate power. Any act of rebellion keeps alive the embers for larger movements that follow us. It passes on another

narrative. It will, as the rot of the state consumes itself, attract wider and wider numbers. Perhaps this will not happen in our lifetimes. But if we persist we will keep this possibility alive. If we do not, it will die.

All energy directed toward reforming political and state structures is useless. All efforts to push through a “progressive” agenda within the corridors of power are naive. Trust in the reformation of our corporate state reflects a failure to recognize that those who govern, including Barack Obama, are as deaf to public demands and suffering as those in the old Communist regimes. We cannot rely on any systems of power, including the pillars of the liberal establishment—the press, liberal religious institutions, universities, labor, culture and the Democratic Party. They have been weakened to the point of anemia or work directly for the corporations that dominate our existence. We can rely now on only ourselves, on each other.

Go to Lafayette Park, in front of the White House, at 10 a.m. Dec. 16. Join dozens of military veterans, myself, Daniel Ellsberg, [Medea Benjamin](#), [Ray McGovern](#), Dr. Margaret Flowers and many others who will make visible a hope the corporate state does not want you to see, hear or participate in. Don’t be discouraged if it is not a large crowd. Don’t let your friends or colleagues talk you into believing it is useless. Don’t be seduced by the sophisticated public relations campaigns disseminated by the mass media, the state or the Democratic Party. Don’t, if you decide to carry out civil disobedience, be cowed by the police. Hope and justice live when people, even in tiny numbers, stand up and fight for them.

There is in our sorrow—for who cannot be profoundly sorrowful?—finally a balm that leads to wisdom and, if not joy, then a strange, transcendent happiness. To stand in a park on a cold December morning, to defy that which we must defy, to do this with others, brings us solace, and perhaps even peace. We will not find this if we allow ourselves to be disabled. We will not find this alone. As long as a few of us rebel it will always remain possible to defeat a system of centralized, corporate power that is as criminal and heartless as those I watched tumble into the ash bin of history in Eastern Europe.

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[Miranda Blue: How Glenn Beck's Twisted Worldview Goads Disturbed People into Acts of Violence](#)

Glenn Beck: Irresponsible And Indifferent To The Violent Consequences of His Dangerous Rhetoric - Beck and His Enablers Should be Held Accountable

How Glenn Beck's Twisted Worldview Goads Disturbed People into Acts of Violence

By Miranda Blue [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 9, 2010 | People For the American Way Foundation | AlterNet

Radio and TV personality Glenn Beck plays a unique and extraordinary role in our political discourse. He’s an entertainer who once [referred](#) to himself as a “rodeo clown.” He’s a self-appointed “educator” whose books and “university” are miseducating millions of Americans with false claims about American history and a distorted view of our Constitution. And he’s an increasingly [messianic](#) figure who claims that he has been divinely anointed to lead the nation back to God.

Central to Beck’s influence is the intensity of his fans’ devotion to him. And central to the danger he poses is his willingness to stoke fear, anger, and hatred among those fans with a toxic, if lucrative, mixture of conspiracy theories and charges that America is on the verge of being destroyed by enemies from within. In Beck’s world, those enemies include not only President Obama and Democratic congressional leaders, but also progressive advocacy organizations, unions, and

even churches that promote social justice as a part of their religious mission. What Beck preaches is that these are not merely political opponents with policy disagreements, but agents of evil whose goal is the destruction of America and who will stop at nothing -- including the deaths of millions -- to advance their freedom-destroying plans.

Beck has also raised the stakes by claiming a divine mandate for his view of the Constitution and the U.S. government. He has not only attacked President Obama's politics, but has [called](#) the president's views on the nature of salvation "evil" and "satanic." Beck and David Barton, the Religious Right pseudo-historian he promotes, claim that their views of limited government and the Constitution are divinely inspired. So progressives are not only un-American, they are un-Christian and anti-God. "If we do not put God at the center of our own personal lives and the center of our country, we will not survive," Beck [said](#) in August. "The country will be washed with blood and then someone will have to start over, and God only knows how long that takes."

Beck's propaganda traffics in alarmism, paranoia, racial resentment, and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. These would make for a combustible mix at any time. But it's an even more dangerous combination during a time of widespread economic hardship, when so many people are hurting and increasingly desperate. While backing politicians who don't believe the government has a role in addressing that pain, Beck offers explanations that can deepen the desperation.

"Times of threat bring increased aggression," 21-year CIA veteran Jerrold Post [told](#) *Politico* last fall. "And the whole country's under threat now, with the economic difficulties and political polarization. The need to have someone to blame is really strong in human psychology. And once you have someone to blame, especially when there's a call to action, some see it as a time for heroic action."

For some troubled Beck fans, that "heroic action" has meant taking up arms against the nation's "enemies" as Beck has defined them. The poison that Beck administers daily to our political culture has intensified the nation's divisions and inspired murderous violence. But rather than take any responsibility for the impact of his irresponsible rhetoric, Beck has responded by dismissing his critics, raising the volume of his violent rhetoric, and repeatedly suggesting to his viewers that he is in danger of being killed by progressive leaders.

Beck's indifference to the damaging consequences of his language and actions has led a number of public interest organizations to join forces in an effort to hold Beck and Fox News accountable, with a campaign asking owners of televisions in public locations to [turn off Fox](#), and a campaign urging advertisers to [drop Fox](#) and stop funding Beck's irresponsible rhetoric.

We are not arguing that even his most inflammatory language makes him legally responsible for the actions of unstable or ideological individuals. But there is no question that words and ideas have consequences, and that he and those who support him bear moral responsibility for the consequences of his actions. His language creates a climate in which violence is more likely and less surprising.

Beck complains that his critics are enemies of free speech out to silence any dissenting voices. In fact, his critics are using their own First Amendment freedom to challenge Beck's irresponsibility. His false charges and almost-impossible-to-parody conspiracy-theory chalkboard moments, go well beyond the kind of hard-hitting political disagreement that we expect and embrace in an open and democratic society. Beck is peddling something different and pernicious. It's time to hold Beck, and those who enable him, accountable.

Media Matters and People For the American Way are two of the organizations Beck has identified as his enemies. Media Matters documents Beck's actions on a daily basis, creating a massive archive of evidence supporting the challenge to his enablers. People For the American Way's Right Wing Watch has analyzed and reported on Beck's rhetorical tactics.

This report provides an overview of Beck's rhetorical strategies and some of the deadly and damaging impact they have had; a more comprehensive catalogue of his radio and television comments can be found at [Media Matters](#).

He's no MLK (or Gandhi)

Beck tries to protect himself from criticism by comparing himself to Martin Luther King, Jr., and telling his followers that they should not engage in violence. But Beck undermines those calls to eschew violence by regularly employing his own violent imagery, and by portraying his political opponents in extreme terms -- as murderous thugs bent on destroying freedom and America itself.

As author Gerald Posner [told](#) MSNBC's Chris Matthews, the atmosphere created by hostile rhetoric is "a license that allows somebody who's on the edge to cross the edge from thinking about acting out to actually crossing the line and being violent and thinking they can change history with a single bullet. And we have shown time and time again that that's possible."

Some of Beck's own followers aren't so willing to renounce violence. Stephen Broden, who has appeared frequently on Beck's Fox News show and spoke at his Restoring Honor rally this summer, has promoted Beck-style inflammatory rhetoric about death panels, claimed that the country's economic crises were contrived, and compared the Obama administration to Nazis, all charges familiar to Beck's listeners. When Broden, who was a Republican nominee for Congress from Texas this year, was [challenged](#) by a reporter, he backed away from some of his statements. But he would not renounce the possibility of political violence. "Our nation was founded on violence," he said, affirming that he believes violent overthrow of the U.S. government is an option that "is on the table."

The Threat of "Great and Powerful Evil" -- Communism, Fascism, or Both

Not long ago, American conservatives loudly cried foul if any activist on the left used language comparing the American Right Wing to fascist regimes elsewhere, but the same conservative movement now applauds and repeats charges made by Beck (and other pundits and elected officials) that the Obama administration is filled with communist revolutionaries and that the administration is bent on a Hitlerian destruction of American democracy. With images of Nazis marching behind him, Beck [said](#), "People are once again feeling oppressed by an out of control state.... Like it or not, fascism is on the rise."

Beck has [suggested](#) that the Obama administration is looking for a "Reichstag moment" that it would use to seize military power and put an end to democracy. But that's not the worst charge: Beck has [said](#) that the progressives -- or, in his mind, communist revolutionaries -- in the administration are willing to pursue their goals with genocidal violence resulting in millions of deaths. "The revolution of 1776 was a picnic compared to what the revolutionaries of today would like to do," he [charged](#), "It's not a lot of fun. Usually millions of people die." Here's [more](#):

"Great and powerful evil is on our doorstep...it is starting all over again...it shows you how close we came to falling into the same kind of trap that Europe did, that led to 70 million dead in China, led to 40 million dead with Stalin, 10 million dead by Hitler. We were this close. The progressive movement, it's the same thing, we know better than you, we're smarter than you...it's not about freedom, don't let them lie to you, it's not about democracy, it is about control."

On his June 10 show, Beck warned that "anarchists, Marxists, communists, revolutionaries, Maoists" have to "eliminate 10 percent of the U.S. population" in order to "gain control." They couldn't achieve such a goal when Richard Nixon was president, Beck stated, because "the family was together" and the government under Nixon "wasn't as corrupt as it is now." Beck added: "Now they can. Now they can."

On a smaller scale, when speaking to a woman who called in fearful that the Obama administration will want to kill her because she's going on disability, Beck agreed that they would.

Beck frequently charges that the left is planning to provoke violence in America to achieve its aims. As *Washington Post* reporter Dana Milbank [put](#) it, "Beck has at times spoken against violence, but he more often forecasts it." Beck has said that progressives [support](#) "armed insurrection," and that President Obama is ["poking and prodding"](#) the Tea Party to violence.

* "I believe these are the most dangerous two years of our republic. Because in the end, in revolutions, the real dangerous killers show up when things start to fall apart. When the nudge moves to shove, and the shove doesn't work, the killers show up. It happens every time. That's why we must be united for peace, we must be united with love, we must be united with God." [*The Glenn Beck Program*, 9/27/10]

* "Violence will come. And violence will come from the left. Violence is part of the plan. Not mine, not yours." [*The Glenn Beck Program*, 9/13/10]

* **"I fear a Reichstag moment, a -- God forbid -- another 9-11, something that will turn this machine on,** and power will be seized and voices will be silenced. God help us all." [Newsmax.com, 10/7/09]

Beck even twisted straightforward comments by former administration official Van Jones encouraging progressives to advocate for their priorities with the administration into a revolutionary plot. In Beck's telling, Jones told activists "you have to force the president to do what he knows he has to," which is reminiscent of a story about Franklin Delano Roosevelt telling an advocate, "I agree with you, now make me do it." But in Beck's hands it [becomes](#) code for the 1957 Czech revolution with "bad guys" orchestrating riots and violence so that the average people would support an authoritarian response.

"The far left needs the violence...they create chaos...they're all infiltrated in the government... the government can swoop in to fix the problem."

Beck is even promoting his novel *The Overton Window* by [claiming](#) that its conspiratorial plot to frame a Tea Party-like group in a violent attack is about to come true, with Beck himself as the one about to be framed. He cited a phrase in Tides Foundation founder Drummond Pike's letter to Fox News advertisers -- "no one ... wants to see another Oklahoma City"-- and claimed, "They are setting up another Oklahoma City. They are claiming that one is coming. And they've already marked the one who caused it."

Beck Predicts His Own Martyrdom

Beck has repeatedly suggested that the biggest targets of his criticism -- President Obama and philanthropist George Soros -- may be planning to have him killed. Last year he said, "[Y]ou can shoot me in the head ... but there will be 10 others that line up." Beck claimed that "the most powerful people on the planet on the left" were "not going to go away easy" because "[t]his game is for keeps. This is who controls the United States of America and its destiny." He asked his listeners to "please keep me in your prayers, keep my staff in your prayers, for safety, for wisdom," adding, "Just pray for protection, please." [*The Glenn Beck Program*, 9/8/09]

Back in March, it was the Obama administration: "For those of you in the administration, who are coming after me ... remember, you've broken three [of the 10 Commandments], let's not make it four; thou shalt not kill." [*Glenn Beck*, 3/23/10]

During his recent prolonged attack on Soros, he said "I do have a bulletproof car, George. I just want you to know." He also said to Soros, "You can gun me down in the street, I'm not shutting up." He said that he had upgraded his home security "two days before the George Soros show."

He [warned](#) his viewers that a recent Soros gift to National Public Radio was "a bounty on my head" and announced, "This may be it for me." He even portrayed himself in cosmic good-and-evil terms, intoning, "Strike me down, Vader, strike me down," a reference to the Star Wars movie series implying that his legacy would be even stronger if he were martyred.

The U.S. itself is at risk

As inflammatory as all Beck's previous charges have been, perhaps his most violence-inciting charge is that Obama and his allies are actually seeking the destruction of the Constitution and the United States itself. In one show he portrayed the

president pouring gasoline on the American people and lighting it on fire, and [warned](#) that Obama was “closing Gitmo and letting the terrorists onto the streets.”

Last summer he warned that “the republic is in danger” and that “the American way of life is being systematically dismantled and destroyed.” [*The Glenn Beck Program*, 8/5/09]

In January he warned, “Our Constitution, our republic -- if it survives -- it will only survive because the people are waking up and through the grace of God, because we are that close to losing our republic.” [*The Glenn Beck Program*, 1/20/10]

In May he suggested that Obama is “trying to destroy the country” and is pushing America toward civil war. [*The Glenn Beck Program*, 5/19/10]

And just this month he [said](#) that all the nation’s enemies are uniting to “destroy the United States of America.” He has [described](#) the main goal of Soros-funded progressive organizations as “the overthrow of the United States government and the collapsing of the dollar.”

Promoting Classic Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory

Beck recently devoted a huge amount of airtime to a multiple-show attack on George Soros, a financier and philanthropist who has funded a number of the progressive organizations that Beck tells his viewers are out to destroy America. Journalist Michelle Goldberg [called](#) the Soros attacks “a new low on American television” and spelled out the way Beck’s anti-Soros conspiracy theory was just an updated version of standard malevolent-Jews-secretly-control-the-world anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism, like all ideologies, tells a story about the world. It’s a story about almost occult Jewish power, about cabals that manipulate world events for their own gain. In classic anti-Semitic narratives, Jews control both the elites and the masses; they’re responsible for the communist revolution and the speculative excesses of capitalism. Their goal is to undermine society so that they can take over. Through the lens of anti-Semitism, social division, runaway inflation, and moral breakdown all make sense because they all have the same cause. Nazi propaganda called Jews *drahtzieher*—wire-pullers. They constitute a power above and beyond ordinary government authority. “There is a super-government which is allied to no government, which is free from them all, and yet which has its hand in them all,” Henry Ford wrote in *The International Jew*.

If you know this history, you’ll understand why Glenn Beck’s two-part “exposé” on George Soros, whom Beck calls “The Puppet Master,” was so shocking, even by Beck’s degraded standards. The program, which aired Tuesday and Wednesday, was a symphony of anti-Semitic dog-whistles. Nothing like it has ever been on American television before.

Oddly, Beck complained that Soros had “brought down four governments” -- Soros’ Open Society Fund did back pro-democratic forces struggling against communist tyrannies -- and warned that the U.S. would be the fifth.

Beck’s implication is that there was something sinister in Soros’ support for anti-communist civil society organizations in the former Soviet Union. Further, he sees such support as evidence that Soros will engineer a communist coup here in the United States. This kind of thinking only makes sense within the conspiratorial mind-set of classic anti-Semitism, in which Jews threaten all governments equally. And as a wealthy Jew with a distinct Eastern European accent, Soros is a perfect target for such theories.

And it goes without saying that this kind of conspiracy theory has often fueled anti-Jewish hatred and violence.

Progressive radio host Cenk Uygur [described](#) another part of Beck’s attack on Soros as “a lie so grotesque that it goes beyond the pale of even dirty politics.” As a child, Soros’ father tried to protect him from Nazis by bribing a local official to claim that Soros was the official’s Christian godson. At one point, the 14-year old Soros had to accompany the official on a trip to appraise land that had been confiscated by Jews. In Beck’s version, that became Soros helping the government confiscate the land of his friends and neighbors, and worse, “a Jewish boy helping send the Jews to the death camps.”

The episode is classic Beck, told without regard for the truth, and with an intention to cast the most awful aspersions on his target. The Anti-Defamation League's Abraham Foxman [called](#) Beck's criticisms of Soros "horrific," "repugnant," and "offensive."

In recent months Beck, in his eagerness to smear his opponents as America-hating-communists, has been [promoting](#) books that turn out to have been written by notoriously anti-Semitic authors. Beck [cited](#) Elizabeth Dilling's 1934 "The Red Network" as evidence that "McCarthy was absolutely right." Media Matters calls Dilling "one of the more prolific anti-Semites of the mid-20th century." Beck has also [quoted from](#) "Secrets of the Federal Reserve" by white supremacist Eustace Mullin.

Beck's own violent rhetoric

In a speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference, Beck [called](#) progressivism "a cancer" on our society, and said, "It must be cut out of the system.... You must eradicate it. It cannot co-exist."

Beck [said](#) that if government agents tried to force his children to take the flu vaccine -- a favorite fear on the right-wing fringe -- they would "meet Mr. Smith and Mr. Wesson."

He has [joked](#) about putting poison in Nancy Pelosi's wine, choking Michael Moore to death with his bare hands, and beating Charles Rangel with a shovel.

"I'm thinking about killing Michael Moore, and I'm wondering if I could kill him myself, or if I would need to hire somebody to do it. No, I think I could. I think he could be looking me in the eye, you know, and I could just be choking the life out." [xii]

"I want to kill [Rep.] Charlie Rangel with a shovel."

"Every night I get down on my knees and pray that Dennis Kucinich will burst into flames."

Last year, referring to a photo of Obama and other Democrats, he [said](#), "... These bloodsucker vampires are not gonna just be satisfied with sucking the blood out of [business], their thirst for power and control is unquenchable. They will not stop... Either the economy becomes like the walking dead, or ya drive a stake through the heart of the bloodsuckers."

Beck has warned "ACORN, GE, Obama, SEIU" that "you are awakening a sleeping giant, and I have nothing to do with it" and that "America is waking up. You know the American Revolution took place with 12 percent of the population? Twelve. Are you telling me there is not 30 percent of this population that you will have to shoot me in the forehead before I let somebody into my house to tell me how to raise my children; you will have to shoot me in the forehead before you take away my gun; you will have to shoot me in the forehead before I acquiesce and be silent."

And he has quoted a letter by Thomas Jefferson warning " 'If they lose freedom' -- he's speaking of us, future generations -- 'if they lose freedom, there will be rivers of blood.' " Beck continued in his own words, "Boy, I hope that's not true, but I can tell you there will be rivers of blood if we don't have values and principles." [Glenn Beck, [5/14/10](#)]

Beck is among right-wing voices opposing the construction of the Islamic center that has been inaccurately labeled the "Ground Zero Mosque." And he has [warned](#) American Muslims that other terrorist attacks or a war in the Middle East could provoke violence against them:

All you Muslims who have sat on your frickin' hands the whole time and have not been marching in the streets and have not been saying, "Hey, you know what? There are good Muslims and bad Muslims. We need to be the first ones in the recruitment office lining up to shoot the bad Muslims in the head." I'm telling you, with God as my witness, America is -- no I'm not going to make this an American thing -- human beings are not strong enough, unfortunately, to restrain themselves from putting up razor wire and putting you on one side of it. When things -- when people become hungry, when people see that their way of life is on the edge of being over, they will put razor wire up and just based on the way you look or just based on your religion, they will round you up. Is that wrong? Oh my gosh, it is Nazi, World War II wrong, but society has proved it time and time again: It will happen.

He has issued a similar warning to “illegal aliens”:

I've got a quick message for illegal aliens if you happen to be watching. You better start packing your bags. And to the politicians in Washington who are soft on illegal immigration, start packing up your office, because when the terrorists strike, which they will, and we find out that they're here illegally from some other country, we will be telling all of you to get the hell out. [Glenn Beck, May 9, 2007]

With all that, Beck is happy to [blame](#) progressives and “political correctness” for violence. Rich Gardner of the Philadelphia Independent Media Center wrote:

Yet, Beck says that ‘the American people...feel disenfranchised right now. [They] feel like nobody's hearing their voice. The government isn't hearing their voice. Even if you call, they don't listen to you on both sides.’ Beck goes on: "And every time they do speak out, they're shut down by political correctness. How do you not have those people turn into [Michael McLendon, the killer of 10 people in Alabama]?"

Violent Consequences

Discussing inflammatory rhetoric and its consequences with MSNBC's Chris Matthews last year, author Gerald Posner [said](#), “It's a license that allows somebody who's on the edge to cross the edge from thinking about acting out to actually crossing the line and being violent and thinking they can change history with a single bullet. And we have shown time and time again that that's possible.”

Glenn Beck's inflammatory rhetoric has been tied to a number of violent attacks and threats against Beck's targets and other public figures.

The Tides Foundation

In July, the San Francisco-based Tides Foundation was [targeted](#) for a massacre by Byron Williams. Fortunately, Williams was stopped by police and injured after a ferocious gun battle before he could carry out his assassinations at Tides and the ACLU. As the *Christian Science Monitor* [reported](#),

Since then, alleged attacker Byron Williams has said in jailhouse interviews that he wanted to “start a revolution.” He says Beck was not the direct cause of his turning violent. But he does say: “I would have never started watching Fox News if it wasn't for the fact that Beck was on there. And it was the things that he did, it was the things he exposed that blew my mind.”

Beck has waged a rhetorical war against the Tides Foundation, placing them at the center of his chalkboard conspiracy theories, calling the foundation “bullies” and “thugs” and central to George Soros' plans to destroy America. “I'm comin' for ya, oh, I'm comin' for ya,” he [warned](#) Tides on the air in September, saying that he wasn't making threats but was planning to reverse all the work that Tides had done.

As *Media Matters* [detailed](#), Byron Williams told journalist John Hamilton that Beck, “blew my mind,” **adding** that Beck is “like a schoolteacher on TV.” Williams also said that “Beck is gonna deny everything about violent approach and deny everything about conspiracies, but he'll give you every reason to believe it. He's protecting himself, and you can't blame him for that. So, I understand what he's doing.” Williams continued:

And I'd say, well, you know, that's the thing. It's that anything you do is going to be considered promoting terror attacks or promoting violence. So now they've got Beck labeled as this guy that is trying to incite violence. And what I say is that if the truth incites violence, it means that we've been living too long in the lies.

Beck's response was to dismiss any responsibility for violence by the “nutjob” and to “savor” -- in journalist Milbank's words -- the fact that “no one knew what Tides was until the blackboard.”

Pittsburgh Police

In April 2009, Richard Poplawski shot and killed three police officers who had been called to his Pittsburgh house. Poplawski was [reportedly](#) a white supremacist who believed the Obama administration was planning to take away people's guns and set up a police state. He once posted a YouTube clip of Glenn Beck discussing a conspiracy theory about FEMA setting up concentration camps to a white supremacist website.

Journalist Will Bunch [interviewed](#) Poplawski when researching his book *The Backlash: Right-Wing Radicals, High-Def Hucksters and Paranoid Politics in the Age of Obama*. Bunch found that Poplawski's fears about the "Obama gun confiscation" were the proverbial tip of the iceberg when it came to the increasingly paranoid ideas that he seemed to glean largely from talk radio and from Beck.

"Rich, like myself, loved Glenn Beck," Poplawski's best friend Eddie Perkovic told me during a long interview in his narrow rowhouse on the steep hill running down to the Allegheny....Perkovic and his mom -- who also had a close relationship with the accused cop-killer, still awaiting trial -- told me that for months Poplawski had been obsessed with an idea -- frequently discussed by Beck, including in ads for his sponsor Food Insurance-- of the need to stockpile food and even toilet paper for a societal breakdown. Poplawski was also convinced that paper money would become worthless -- another claim given credence by the Fox News Channel host, particularly in close connection with his frequent shilling for the now-under-investigation gold-coin peddler Goldline International.

Senator Patty Murray

Charles Wilson was convicted of making death threats against Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, which included a series of violent phone messages on themes familiar to anyone who has listened to Beck or other right-wing pundits. Among the [messages](#) cited in court documents:

By your attempts to overtake this country with socialism, somebody's gonna get to you one way or another and blow your fucking brains out, and I hope it does happen. If I have the chance, I would do it.

Kill the fucking Senator! Hang the fucking Senator! I hope somebody puts a fucking bullet between your fucking eyes. Far left liberal socialist democratic bitch. You mother-fucker. You sold the fucking people of the country out for socialism. I hope somebody fucking erases your fucking life. Yes, I hope somebody assassinates you, you fucking bitch.

We are going to fuck you up. We are going to fuck you up as bad as we can. Yes, the independents. The real people of this country, not you spineless fucking socialists. You better watch your fucking back, baby, because there's people gonna come after you with fucking both fucking barrels, bitch.

Court filings also include a statement by a cousin of Wilson that his fears "were grown and fostered by Mr. Beck's persuasive personality" and that he "was under the spell that Glenn Beck cast."

Illinois League of Women Voters

Beck targeted two officials of the League of Women Voters of Illinois after an October 20 debate in which one official declined an audience member's request that the event start with the Pledge of Allegiance. After Beck attacked the two officials by name, they experienced an uptick of hateful calls and emails. Executive Director Jan Czarnik said she had [reported](#) death threats to the FBI.

Among the emails Czarnik [received](#) was this one:

You had better put a leash on your liberal lunatic Tate-Bradish. She will take you down. Her Pledge of Allegiance video is going viral, now that Beck outed her fanaticism. You will follow NPR down the rathole, thanks to her.

On the October 25 edition of his Fox News show, Beck said that the two women are "almost like in bed with George Soros."

Ideas and Rhetoric Have Consequences

Concerns about the impact of violent, inflammatory rhetoric like Glenn Beck's are widespread and extend well beyond the progressive advocacy community to include members of law enforcement and some Republican commentators.

"The Becks of the world are people who are venting their opinions and it is inflammatory, it generates a lot of emotion and generates in some people overreaction..." [says](#) International Union of Police Associations spokesman Rich Roberts. "Inflammatory speech has a tendency to trigger those kinds of emotions."

Former Republican Member of Congress and MSNBC host Joe Scarborough criticized Beck last year for calling President Obama a racist. As reported by *Politico*, Scarborough [said](#), "You cannot preach hatred. You cannot say the president's a racist. You cannot stir up things that could have very deadly consequences."

Security experts [told](#) *Politico* that potentially violent loners "can be influenced by the atmosphere around them" and that "angry rhetoric and images in the culture can agitate and inspire those loners to cross the line from anger to violence."

James Alan Fox, the Lipman Family Professor of Criminology, Law and Public Policy at Northeastern University in Boston, [told](#) the *Christian Science Monitor* in October that people who act out in violence tend to be scapegoating for things going on in their own lives. And, as David Neiwert, journalist and author of *The Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right*, has [noted](#), right-wing conspiracy theories of the type promoted by Glenn Beck support scapegoating narratives.

More from Neiwert:

Ideologues who inspire violent action through radicalizing propaganda have been with us for many decades, even centuries.....And what we know from experience about volatile, unstable actors...is that they can be readily induced into violent action by hateful rhetoric that demonizes and dehumanizes other people. And thanks to human nature and those same freedoms, we will certainly always have fearmongering demagogues among us. But the purveyors of such profoundly irresponsible rhetoric need to be called on it -- especially when they hold the nation's media megaphones.

Criminologist Fox [sees](#) the media's role this way: "It gives them the opportunity to see themselves as a political martyr. Someone who is going to show society that he is right and everyone else is wrong. And [the media] gives him the opportunity to think he could become a hero for fellow conservatives."

After the police shootout that prevented Byron Williams' planned attack on the Tides Foundation, Rep. Peter King (R) of New York, senior Republican on the Homeland Security Committee, told Media Matters, "It is important that everyone in public life, whether on the right or on the left, realize that words have consequences."

Glenn Beck and his enablers do not want to accept that his words -- particularly his false, inflammatory rhetoric that is designed to stir passionate fear and apocalyptic anger -- can be responsible for creating a climate of violence that undermines our democratic society and for encouraging deadly violence among some of those who hear it.

The *Washington Post*'s Dana Milbank had some [advice](#) for Beck:

Beck has prophesied darkly to his millions of followers that we are reaching "a point where the people will have exhausted all their options. When that happens, look out." One night on Fox, discussing the case of a man who killed 10 people, Beck suggested such things were inevitable. "If you're a conservative, you are called a racist, you want to starve children," he said. "And every time they do speak out, they are shut down by political correctness. How do you not have those people turn into that guy?"

Here's one idea: Stop encouraging them.

A Call for Accountability

In a previous [report](#) on free speech and irresponsible speech, People For the American Way wrote:

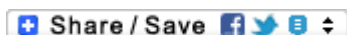
Among Americans' most prized possessions are the freedoms enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution. In a free society, controversial public policy issues should be expected to generate vigorous and even heated debate. Our political leaders should expect to be subject to exacting scrutiny and energetic criticism. And Americans must be willing to embrace the First Amendment rights even, or especially, of those whose opinions we disagree with and find offensive.

But Americans must also be willing to use their First Amendment freedoms to challenge those who exploit their political positions or media megaphones to promote lies that are intended to inflame rather than inform, that encourage paranoia rather than participation, and whose consequences are at best divisive and at worst, violently destructive.

Those who are challenging Beck and Fox are taking on the responsibilities of engaged citizenship, and are acting to promote the nation's best values.

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Sunday, December 12, 2010

[Caroline Arnold: Losing Our Moral Compass in Pursuit of Profit, Efficiency](#)

Losing Our Moral Compass in Pursuit of Profit, Efficiency

by Caroline Arnold [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 12, 2010 | Record Courier (Ohio) | CommonDreams

Recently, on a cold morning with a little snow fooling around in the bright air, I was chilled by this sentence in an AP news story: "The idea isn't to just raise revenue, economists say, but finally to turn Americans into frugal health-care consumers by having them face the full costs of their medical decisions ("Tax Break on Employer Health Plans Targeted" Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, AP 11/29/10)

Oh, of course -- all Americans should face the full costs of their decisions to have broken bones, heart attacks, or sick children, right?

Even more chilling to me were the underlying assumptions that economists/technocrats decide what's best for everyone, and that it's just as important -- if not more important -- to turn Americans into tame consumers for the private sector as it is to raise revenues for the common good.

This led me to some further, chillier assumptions:

- democracy and politics are messy and unmanageable and must be replaced by the disciplined professionalism of scientists, technicians and economists.
- ordinary citizens lack the ability to deal with the "real world" of money, brokerage, extraction of natural resources, wars, weapons and political power, and must be kept out of decisions about them or even knowing about them.
- our most important moral obligation to our children is to not leave them any debts.
- to be secure we must pre-emptively kill terrorists, would-be terrorists, might-be terrorists, geriatric terrorists, stone-throwing juvenile terrorists
- the economically sound is the morally right.

In his recent book "[The Logic of Discipline](#)", Alasdair Roberts proposes that democracy has been undermined by financial liberalization, free trade and a globalized economy. Technicians, economists and managers, he observes, are very skeptical of the ability of democracy to make "the right decisions" for financial stability and security, and they doubt that ordinary politicians and voters are 'disciplined' enough to make sensible policy decisions.

That's why, Roberts suggests, we have a new generation of professional technocrats and managers supported by corporate money and ideology who are running not only our giant corporations but our political parties and our governments. They have reconfigured central banking, fiscal control, farm policy, taxes, health and safety regulations, port and airport management, infrastructure development and energy policy to meet the economic needs of multinational corporations in a global economy, not the needs of human beings on a fragile planet. And they have determined that secrecy is a basic necessity for good management, to keep the public from interfering with the professionals' decisions.

That's why we have public officials, democratically-elected (sic) politicians, banks and giant corporations like Amazon & PayPal all deciding that WikiLeaks is a criminal operation and Julian Assange is a terrorist who deserves to die.

Roberts further notes that the world of fiscal discipline is amoral: efficiency and objectivity always trump emotional and unreliable ideas of right and wrong

That's why -- or at least how -- in the pursuit of profit, efficiency and financial stability in global marketplaces, Americans are losing our moral compass. Many people now believe -- or say they believe -- that our most important moral responsibility is to the economy: reduce the deficit, cut taxes, protect profits, and shrink government spending, and keep actions of public officials secret.

So: we have messed up the entire world socially, economically, politically and morally, and have failed to address our habits of consumption that are warming the planet and destroying ecosystems that sustain the web of life. The oceans are rising, disaster and disease stalk humans and ecosystems, war and destruction consume natural resources, but the most important things to us are to cut taxes and government spending, reduce the deficit and keep secret the actions and words of government officials because we the people can't be trusted.

We don't even trust coming generations to find better ways to live together. Instead, we base our expenditures for their education, nutrition and health care on principles of profit and "fiscal responsibility", we teach them that killing in war is noble and exciting, and that most strangers should be feared and mistrusted, while we use up the natural resources they will need to survive.

What now? In this Christmas season it's tempting to speculate: What if God, finally fed up with our arrogance, pride, greed, cruelty and bungling, decided to send down a new prophet, a few more angels, or another Savior, what would they recommend?

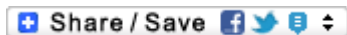
A new prophet could hardly do better than Micah: "...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

The angels of the nativity story gave us a fine moral ideal to aspire to: Peace on earth and good will toward all, but it's never caught on. Neither has the excellent advice of Jesus of Nazareth: Love your neighbors, turn the other cheek, go the extra mile.

Because finally, democracy and freedom cannot be created by a Savior, or by economists or presidents. Democracy can only be created by the people within it. If people can be "turned into frugal consumers" or kept in the dark about how their government operates, they aren't free and there is no democracy: they are not participants but pawns, not citizens but subjects.

Before joining Senator John Glenn's Washington staff in 1985, **Caroline Arnold** (csarnold@neo.rr.com) was a teacher, founded a small business, and served three terms on the Kent (OH) Board of Education. In retirement she sits on the boards of Kent Social Services and Family & Community Services in Portage County and is principal cellist of the Stow Symphony.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:16 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

John Kozy: The Immorality of Austerity

Western Civilization and Classical Economics: The Immorality of Austerity

by Prof. John Kozy [article link](#)

December 12, 2010 | Global Research

When a civilization abandons its morality, no rationalization can be devised to justify its continued existence. It is likely that many reasons can be given for this abandonment in the Western world, although I am convinced that one predominates—the expansion of law. Law once governed various kinds of behavior. It has now encroached upon various kinds of speech and is even being applied to the realm of belief. When someone is accused of having done something wrong, the reply offered usually is something like, "What was done complied with all legal requirements." But "right" has never been defined as "conforms to law," because thoughtful people have long noticed that the law itself can be a great crime, and the worst criminals in a culture can be its lawgivers, as the people of Ireland, Portugal, France, Spain, Greece, and Great Britain are now finding out. Americans will soon find it out too.

Numerous critics of classical economists over the past two centuries have argued that it is immoral when judged by any of the recognized moral codes. Major aspects of it clearly violate the Golden Rule. It violates many, perhaps all, of the Ten Commandments. It conflicts with various teachings of Jesus. Aristotle's Ethics can be used to demonstrate its viciousness. It violates Kant's Categorical Imperative and Mill's Utilitarianism. Yet some of its proponents continue to argue that The Wealth of Nations is not inconsistent with moral principles. Clive Cook and Gavin Kennedy recently made such a claim, but what they cite as evidence doesn't withstand scrutiny.

First of all, they base the claim on Smith's earlier book, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, in which he argues that conscience results from observing the condition of others, generating sympathy, which then serves as the basis of moral judgments.

Although I have no doubt that different communities view this book differently, the philosophical community has generally considered it sophomoric. In my decades as a professor of philosophy, not once did I see the book included in the standard philosophical curriculum. Most philosophy professors I knew had little knowledge of the book's existence. So even if

someone could cogently argue that *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations* are philosophically consistent, that argument would have little bearing on whether classical economics is moral.

Smith has never been recognized in philosophical circles as a major thinker. As a matter of fact, he's hardly recognized at all. And even some economists have noticed the sophomoric nature of his thinking. One highly respected, renowned economist, whose name I shall let the reader guess at, said this: "His very limitation made for success. Had he been more brilliant, he would not have been taken so seriously. Had he dug more deeply, had he unearthed more recondite truth, had he used more difficult and ingenious methods, he would not have been understood. But he had no such ambitions; in fact he disliked whatever went beyond plain common sense. He never moved above the heads of even the dumbest readers. He led them on gently, encouraging them by trivialities and homely observations, making them feel comfortable all along."

Yet Kennedy lists the elements of morality that Smith included in *The Wealth of Nations*. "[Smith] was no libertarian. . . . His idea of 'natural liberty' was almost the opposite of what it is usually taken to mean (namely, 'do as you wish'). He was at pains in both books to emphasize the importance of self-control, of regard for the opinions of others, and of an expansive role of government in providing security, rule of law, and economic infrastructure. Way ahead of his time, he was even in favor of compulsory schooling." An interesting list, but not one that justifies the view that Smith's view of the economy is moral. A moralist would have expected to see something about poverty, hunger, and suffering, all of which are absent.

A serious, irrefutable proof of the immorality embodied in *The Wealth of Nations* and classical economics in general is easily devised.

Classical theorists like Smith aver that products derive their value from the labor that goes into producing them, and that labor, itself, is bought and sold. Wages, which are the price of labor, have a natural price which is the price needed to enable labor to subsist and to perpetuate itself without either increase or decrease. These dogmas are known as the labor theory of value and the subsistence theory of wages respectively. Some revealing implications can be derived from them.

First notice this oddity: labor produces products and the amount of labor expended determines their value. But labor is paid not the value of the products it produces but merely a subsistence wage. I defy anyone, economist or not, to justify that principle on moral grounds. Can Cook or Kennedy find an application of sympathy in this principle?

Second, the subsistence theory of wages describes a condition similar to that used by animal husbandry in dealing with livestock. Classical economics treats labor as animal husbandry treats cows. Can treating a fellow human being as a farm animal ever be morally justified? Where is sympathy found in this? Working people, labor, those who create all the culture's wealth, are nothing but farm, factory, and when necessary, cannon fodder.

But economists will say that these aspects of classical economics are not paid much attention any more. Perhaps, but what economists pay attention to and what goes on in the economy are different things. The *Wall Street Journal's* report that 70 percent of people in North America live paycheck to paycheck demonstrates conclusively that the subsistence theory of wages is still being applied; our economists are just not honest enough to tell us about it.

If a subsistence wage is all that this economy pays working people, how would the culture determine how to treat those people not in the workforce—the aged, the infirm, and the handicapped, even the unemployed? Classical economics has no answer to this question because classical economics does not exist to provide for people generally. Classical economics divides the populace into two groups—capital and labor. Anyone not in one of these groups is somehow irrelevant, which explains why the President and other governmental officials always speak of the upper class and the middle class but never mention the lower class. Yet no one seems to notice that speaking of an upper and middle class without speaking of a lower class is meaningless.

The upshot is that if the dogmas of classical economics are applied consistently, there is no need for any people not capable of functioning in the workforce. So, in keeping with this implication, Andrew Mellon, President Herbert Hoover's treasury secretary recommended that Hoover fight the depression by "liquidating the farmers, liquidating the workers, and driving down wages."

Of course, if this were openly advocated, the outrage would be uncontrollable and the system would be torn asunder. So this fact is obscured by the provision of "safety nets" that provide little safety, since what they are comprised of cannot exceed or even equal the subsistence wage. So Americans have social security which provides no security, unemployment compensation which is too meager to subsist on, welfare which is really illfare, and chancy access to healthcare at best. Yet those who promote this economy can, it seems, always find money to buttress business, create killing machines, and fight continual wars. What few seem to realize is that these consequences are logical implications of the dogmas of classical economics and come straight out of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Livestock, when unneeded, are routinely shipped to slaughter.

The United States and much of the so-called Western World are wallowing in widespread budgetary and sovereign debt crises, and the world's financial elite are forcing many European nations into severe austerity programs much to the chagrin of European peoples. Some of these nations have been referred to by the acronym PIGS, which is apt since pigs are a species of livestock. So what we have, of course, is swineherds sacrificing their livestock for the benefit of the international financial community which cares nothing for people or even the nations they reside in. These financiers validate Jefferson's view that merchants have no country. They also have no morality, not even a smidgen. Neither do the economists who promote this economy.

Signs that the American swineherds are preparing to abandon their own herd by imposing an austerity program on it are displayed in the report of Obama's Deficit Reduction Commission and the insistence of our Republican Congressmen that spending on "entitlements" either be reduced or paid for while spending on wars, foreign aid, and the military be allowed to continue and even increase without any provisions whatsoever for paying for them. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that warfare and foreign aid are necessary economic principals while the American people have fallen into that group of economically irrelevant people that those like Andrew Mellon would have the government liquidate. So the unemployed should be allowed to starve, and the ill should be allowed to perish—both of which principles are perfectly consistent with the "morality" of classical economics.

Yet the most difficult thing to understand is what the proponents of this economy believe the purpose of it all is. What is the goal of all of this destruction, suffering, and killing? Does it give them some kind of deranged pride? Does a banker really feel good when he is told his bank evicted hundreds of families in the past week? Does a general rejoice when he is told that dozens of the enemy and scores of his own troops have been killed in the battle just fought? Does a legislator drink a toast to progress when it is learned that hundreds of children in her/his district go to bed hungry each night? If so, what kind of human beings are they? If not, just what can they possibly be thinking?

All the moral codes mentioned in this piece are Western in origin; yet none now plays a role in how the people of this civilization behave. When a civilization abandons its morality, no rationalization can be devised to justify its continued existence. It is likely that many reasons can be given for this abandonment, although I am convinced that one predominates—the expansion of law. Law once governed various kinds of behavior. It has now encroached upon various kinds of speech and is even being applied to the realm of belief. If there is a single aspect of human life that is not now circumscribed by law, I do not know of it. So when someone is accused of having done something wrong, the reply offered usually is something like, "What was done complied with all legal requirements." But "right" has never been defined as "conforms to law," because thoughtful people have long noticed that the law itself can be a great crime, and that the worst criminals in a culture can be its lawgivers, as the people of Ireland, Portugal, France, Spain, Greece, and Great Britain are now finding out. Americans will soon find it out too.

John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. He has published a textbook in formal logic commercially, in academic journals and a small number of commercial magazines, and has written a number of guest editorials for newspapers. His on-line pieces can be found on <http://www.jkozy.com/> and he can be emailed from that site's homepage.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:13 PM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Scott Creighton: If We Lose our Internet Freedoms Because of Wikileaks, You Should At Least Know Why

If We Lose our Internet Freedoms Because of Wikileaks, You Should At Least Know Why

by Scott Creighton [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 11, 2010 | American Everyman | Global Research

Just a little more background on the “hero” Jullian Assange and Wikileaks...

Wikileaks was started up in Dec. of 2006. Oddly enough, as a supposed “leak” site, a dissident site, it was given a great deal of immediate mainstream attention from the likes of the [Washington Post](#), [TIME magazine](#), and even Cass Sunstein the now infamous Obama administration who wrote a paper on how to “cognitively infiltrate” dissident groups in order to steer them in a direction that is useful to the powers that be.

The TIME magazine article is curious because it seems that right off the bat they were telling us how to interpret Wikileaks in such a way that sounded strangely familiar to George W. Bush back just after 9/11...

“By March, more than one million leaked documents from governments and corporations in Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and the former Soviet Bloc will be available online in a bold new collective experiment in whistle-blowing. That is, of course, **as long as you don’t accept any of the conspiracy theories brewing** that [Wikileaks.org](#) **could be a front for the CIA or some other intelligence agency.**” [TIME Jan. 2007](#)

Now remember and read closely... this article was written PRIOR to Wikileaks’ first big “leak”, which according to the article was to occur sometime in March of 2007. So why would TIME magazine be writing about them in the first place if they hadn’t done anything yet? Also, let’s not pass up on that delicious irony: this is TIME magazine singing the praises of a supposed “leak” site which will supposedly expose all kinds of “conspiracy theories” while at the same time telling their readers NOT to believe in those silly “conspiracy theories” circulating about Wikileaks. Just so long as you believe the “right” conspiracy theories, you’ll be alright I guess. This of course perfectly matches Jullian Assange’s own statements about 9/11.

TIME goes on to explain that the Wikileaks version will be the “correct” version (even though they had yet to publish anything at that point... pretty far out on that credibility limb for TIME if you ask me...)

“Instead of a couple of academic specialists, **Wikileaks will provide a forum for the entire global community to examine any document relentlessly for credibility, plausibility, veracity and falsifiability,**” its organizers write on the site’s [FAQ page](#). “**They will be able to interpret documents and explain their relevance to the public.** If a document is leaked from the Chinese government, the entire Chinese dissident community can freely scrutinize and discuss it...” [TIME Jan. 2007](#)

You have to remember, Wikileaks first started targeting China obviously and as we all know from history, typically dissident movements within targeted nations are often funded and run by covert CIA operations. Since Wikileaks started off with a host of Chinese dissidents, it would be logical to assume that at least some of them have links back to the agency. But it gets better.

Few of you might know that just prior to the unveiling of Wikileaks, the intelligence world had an unveiling of their own... a “social media” based resource called “Intellipedia”. Some of you might find this interesting...

“With its own versions of a certain search engine and a certain online encyclopedia, the intelligence community is evolving its use of tools now widespread in the commercial sector, generating both success and controversy.

The new tools include a federated search engine called Oogle and **Intellipedia, a controversial intelligence data-sharing tool based on Wiki social software technology.**” [GCN Sept. 2006](#)

So we see that in Sept. of 2006 there is a concerted effort in the intelligence community to embark on several new “pedia” type programs one which serves as a data-base and another which works like a Google search engine. Why wouldn’t there be a third?

John Young of Cryptome (a well-known and established whistle-blower site) was working with Jullian Assange in Dec. of 2006 while they were getting all of this off the ground so to speak. Eventually he came to a conclusion about Wikileaks and Assange. The following is from one of the last email communications with Assange that John Young sent him which he had released to the public once he came to his conclusions.

“All the messages received were published. **My objections had been building**, shown in later messages, after initial support. The finally fed-up turnaround occurred with the publication today of the \$5 million dollar by July fund-raising goal — see messages at the tail-end. **I called that — along with a delay in offering a public discussion and critique forum and failure to provide a credible batch of leaked documents for public scrutiny — a surefire indication of a scam.** This is the exact technique used by snake oilers, pols and spies. Requests to Cryptome to keep stuff quiet are regular fare and they always get published. Next up, the names and affiliations of the perps if they don’t reveal themselves in an open forum.” [John Young, Dec. 2006](#)

Go [here](#) to read the entire email exchange, from start to finish, including the emails sent to Daniel Ellsberg (apparently he has been emotionally attached to this project from before day-one... so much for Mr. Ellsberg’s journalist objectivity)

It would appear that John Young had problems with the peer review part of the Wikileaks process... notice how that is first and foremost what TIME magazine praises about Wikileaks? Sounds to me like someone is trying to fix the narrative.

So it would appear that TIME and the Washington Post had to come out with supportive articles about Wikileaks because someone was “leaking” information and questions about them and their little project looked doomed to fail before it even got off the ground. Perhaps they got a little help writing all that propaganda from one of Jullian Assange’s first partners in the project... a PR guy affiliated with ABC and News Corp’s Rupert Murdoch.

“**Phillip Andrew Hedley Adams**, [AO](#) (born 12 July 1939) is an [Australian broadcaster](#), [film producer](#), [writer](#), social commentator, [satirist](#) and left-wing pundit. He currently hosts a radio program, [Late Night Live](#), four nights a week on the [ABC](#), and he also writes a weekly column for the [News Limited](#)-owned [newspaper](#), [The Australian](#). **Adams is (or was) on the Advisory Board of Wikileaks.**”

“**Adams began his advertising career** with Foote Cone & Belding and later with Brian Monahan and Lyle Dayman became a partner in the agency Monahan Dayman Adams. They took that company to a successful public listing and Adams became a millionaire in the process. He developed such successful campaigns as “Life – Be In It”^[4], “[Slip, Slop, Slap](#)”^[5], “Break down the Barriers”, “**Guess whose mum has a Whirlpool**” and “watch the big men fly for a Herbert Adams Pie”,”

“**News Limited** is an [Australian newspaper](#) publisher. Until the formation of [News Corporation](#) in 1979, it was the principal holding for the business interests of [Rupert Murdoch](#). Since then, News Limited has been wholly owned by News Corporation.” Wiki

Now that’s just another of the curious associations that Wikileaks seems to hold, though you would never hear about that from Glenn Greenwald or John Pilger. But you will hear about it from me. You tack PR guys with News cork affiliations onto Chinese dissidents who have been probably funded by the CIA in times past... mesh that up with John Young’s 2006 conclusions, and you come away with a different view of Wikileaks altogether... especially when you look at the sum total of the work they have “leaked” over the years. Of course there may still be some of you who prefer to take TIME magazine’s telling suggestion to dismiss the “outrageous conspiracy theories” and for those of you who are still in that category, I offer... Cass Sunstein.

Cass Sunstein also wrote about Wikileaks in Feb of 2007 prior to their release of the first set of Chinese “leaks”. But Sunstein also wrote about infiltrating dissident groups later in 2008. Sunstein currently heads the [White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs](#) for Barack Obama.

“Sunstein co-authored a 2008 paper with [Adrian Vermeule](#), titled “Conspiracy Theories,” in which they wrote, “**The existence of both domestic and foreign conspiracy theories, we suggest, is no trivial matter, posing real risks to the government’s antiterrorism policies, whatever the latter may be.**” They go on to propose that, “***the best response consists in cognitive infiltration of extremist groups***”^[22] where they suggest, among other tactics, “Government agents (and their allies) might enter chat rooms, online social networks, or even real-space groups and attempt to undermine percolating conspiracy theories by raising doubts about their factual premises, causal logic or implications for political action.”

Sunstein and Vermeule also analyze the practice of secret government payments to outside commentators, who are then held out as independent experts; they suggest that “government can supply these independent experts with information” and perhaps prod them into action from behind the scenes,” further warning that “too close a connection will be self-defeating if it is exposed.”^[22] Sunstein and Vermeule argue that the practice of enlisting non-government officials, “might ensure that credible independent experts offer the rebuttal, rather than government officials themselves. There is a tradeoff between credibility and control, however. The price of credibility is that government cannot be seen to control the independent experts.**”” [Wiki](#)**

This internal discourse on the purpose and the practice on infiltrating dissident groups in order to undermine existing “conspiracy theories” was written in 2008, but don’t suppose that it hadn’t been done before. Hell, just look up the Black Panthers for god’s sake. But just take a look at the line “government can supply these independent experts with information” and you start to get the idea behind Wikileaks. Again, consider the type of “leaks” that have been coming out about Iran and North Korea and you get the picture.

“The Central Intelligence Agency disclosed the existence of its top-secret Intellipedia project, based on Wikipedia software (and now containing more than 28,000 pages), in late October. The agency hopes to use dispersed information to reduce the risk of intelligence failures. NASA officials have adopted a wiki site to program NASA software, allowing many participants to make improvements.”

“Wikileaks.org, founded by dissidents in China and other nations, plans to post secret government documents and to protect them from censorship with coded software.”

“But the track record of the new collaborations suggests that they have immense potential. In just a few years, Wikipedia has become the most influential encyclopedia in the world, consulted by judges as well as those who cannot afford to buy books. If the past is prologue, we’re seeing the tip of a very large iceberg.” [Washington Post](#)

Far from being a ringing endorsement of Wikileaks, Sunstein’s article seems to express what we can probably assume was the motivating factor behind the creation of such a program, and that is that they knew it had “immense potential”.

It’s unfortunate what is going to happen. We all know it. We all see it. At some point that 256 character encryption code is going to be released and all of those wanna-be hackers will busily work to decode the 1.6 gig file they downloaded from all those bit torrent sites. Of course the files are unredacted, as has already been made clear by Mr. Assange himself, and the end result will obviously be that some U.S. agent in Pakistan or Somalia or even Yemen will be disclosed and killed. At that point, the Obama administration will have no choice but to shut down thousands of websites (they just ran a BETA test for that last month shutting down 70 all at once) for “national security” reasons. Once that happens, they will of course have to pass a net neutrality bill that allows for licensing requirements for hosting websites which will mean only government approved sites will be allowed and they will be constantly monitored, for the public good of course. And thus, all those troubling “conspiracy theory” sites will be gone and Cass Sunstein can sleep better at night.

I only put this information up because I want people like John Pilger and Glenn Greenwald to know the exact role they are playing in all of this. Not that it will make any difference I suppose and not that the shunting of internet freedom will affect them... Salon won’t shut down and neither will Pilger’s site. Hell, those two might even have to write articles explaining how they agree with the new measures, certainly after a U.S. agent gets killed in some country we aren’t even at war with.

Anyway, I don’t normally do predictions and I hope I am wrong. But I don’t think I am.

But just so we all know, this is the background of the mythology called Wikileaks. If we lose our internet freedoms over this fight, I certainly want us all to have a little better understanding of why.

UPDATE: John Young was just asked by AJ what he thought was the overall point of the Wikileaks program...

AJ: Is this a big theatre with Assange or are they burning him?

Young: Its a theatre operation. Partly lulling, partly testing systems. Testing public reaction “are we going to get traction out of cyber threats or not.” will this work or not, because as you know they haven’t caused any harm that is why they haven’t been charged... and then there will be some lives lost or something will happen... and at some point when this cyber war becomes a real war, we will see because the laws will be ready. [Interview John Young](#)

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Saturday, December 11, 2010

[Naomi Wolf: Espionage Act](#)

Espionage Act: How The Government Can Engage In Serious Aggression Against The People Of The United States

By Naomi Wolf [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 11, 2010 | The Huffington Post | Countercurrents | ICH

This week, Senators Joe Lieberman and Dianne Feinstein engaged in acts of serious aggression against their own constituents, and the American people in general. They [both invoked](#) the [1917 Espionage Act](#) and urged its use in going after Julian Assange. For good measure, Lieberman extended his invocation of the Espionage Act to include a call to use it to investigate the *New York Times*, which published WikiLeaks' diplomatic cables. Reports yesterday [suggest](#) that U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder may seek to invoke the Espionage Act against Assange.

These two Senators, and the rest of the Congressional and White House leadership who are coming forward in support of this appalling development, are cynically counting on Americans' ignorance of their own history -- an ignorance that is stoked and manipulated by those who wish to strip rights and freedoms from the American people. They are manipulatively counting on Americans to have no knowledge or memory of the dark history of the Espionage Act -- a history that should alert us all at once to the fact that this Act has only ever been used -- was designed deliberately to be used -- specifically and viciously to silence people like you and me.

The Espionage Act was crafted in 1917 -- because President Woodrow Wilson wanted a war and, faced with the troublesome First Amendment, wished to criminalize speech critical of his war. In the run-up to World War One, there were many ordinary citizens -- educators, journalists, publishers, civil rights leaders, union activists -- who were speaking out against US involvement in the war. The Espionage Act was [used to round](#) these citizens by the thousands for the newly minted 'crime' of their exercising their First Amendment Rights. A movie producer who showed British cruelty in a film about the Revolutionary War (since the British were our allies in World War I) got a ten-year sentence under the Espionage act in 1917, and the film was seized; poet E.E. Cummings spent three and a half months in a military detention camp under the Espionage Act for the 'crime' of saying that he did not hate Germans. Esteemed Judge Learned Hand wrote that the wording of the Espionage Act was so vague that it would threaten the American tradition of freedom itself. Many were held in prison for weeks in brutal conditions without due process; some, in Connecticut -- Lieberman's home state -- were severely beaten while they were held in prison. The arrests and beatings were widely publicized and had a profound effect, terrorizing those who would otherwise speak out.

Presidential candidate Eugene Debs received a ten-year prison sentence in 1918 under the Espionage Act for daring to read the First Amendment in public. The roundup of ordinary citizens -- charged with the Espionage Act -- who were jailed for daring to criticize the government was so effective in deterring others from speaking up that the Act silenced dissent in this country for a decade. In the wake of this traumatic history, it was left untouched -- until those who wish the same outcome began to try to reanimate it again starting five years ago, and once again, now. Seeing the Espionage Act rise up again is, for anyone who knows a thing about it, like seeing the end of a horror movie in which the zombie that has enslaved the village just won't die.

I predicted in 2006 that the forces that wish to strip American citizens of their freedoms, so as to benefit from a profitable and endless state of war -- forces that are still powerful in the Obama years, and even more powerful now that the Supreme Court decision striking down limits on corporate contributions to our leaders has taken effect -- would pressure Congress and the White House to try to breathe new life yet again into the terrifying Espionage Act in order to silence dissent. In 2005, Bush tried this when the *New York Times* ran its exposé of Bush's illegal surveillance of banking records -- the SWIFT program. This report was based, as is the WikiLeaks publication, on classified information. Then, as now, White House officials tried to invoke the Espionage Act against the *New York Times*. Talking heads on the right used language

such as 'espionage' and 'treason' to describe the *Times'* release of the story, and urged that Bill Keller be tried for treason and, if found guilty, executed. It didn't stick the first time; but, as I warned, since this tactic is such a standard part of the tool-kit for closing an open society -- 'Step Ten' of the '[Ten Steps' to a closed society](#): 'Rename Dissent 'Espionage' and Criticism of Government, 'Treason' -- I knew, based on my study of closing societies, that this tactic would resurface.

Let me explain clearly why activating -- rather than abolishing -- the Espionage Act is an act of profound aggression against the American people. We are all Julian Assange. Serious reporters discuss classified information every day -- go to any Washington or New York dinner party where real journalists are present, and you will hear discussion of leaked or classified information. That is journalists' job in a free society. The White House, too, is continually classifying and declassifying information.

As I noted in [The End of America](#), if you prosecute journalists -- and Assange, let us remember, is the *New York Times* in the parallel case of the Pentagon Papers, not Daniel Ellsberg; he is the publisher, not the one who revealed the classified information -- then any outlet, any citizen, who discusses or addresses 'classified' information can be arrested on 'national security' grounds. If Assange can be prosecuted under the Espionage Act, then so can the *New York Times*; and the producers of *Parker Spitzer*, who discussed the WikiLeaks material two nights ago; and the people who posted a mirror WikiLeaks site on my Facebook 'fan' page; and Fox News producers, who addressed the leak and summarized the content of the classified information; and every one of you who may have downloaded information about it; and so on. That is why prosecution via the Espionage Act is so dangerous -- not for Assange alone, but for every one of us, regardless of our political views.

This is far from a feverish projection: if you study the history of closing societies, as I have, you see that every closing society creates a kind of 'third rail' of material, with legislation that proliferates around it. The goal of the legislation is to call those who criticize the government 'spies', 'traitors', enemies of the state' and so on. *Always* the issue of national security is invoked as the reason for this proliferating legislation. The outcome? A hydra that breeds fear. Under similar laws in Germany in the early thirties, it became a form of 'espionage' and 'treason' to criticize the Nazi party, to listen to British radio programs, to joke about the fuhrer, or to read cartoons that mocked the government. Communist Russia in the 30's, East Germany in the 50's, and China today all use parallel legislation to call criticism of the government -- or whistleblowing -- 'espionage' and 'treason', and 'legally' imprison or even execute journalists, editors, and human rights activists accordingly.

I call on all American citizens to rise up and insist on repeal of the Espionage Act immediately. We have little time to waste. The Assange assault is theater of a particularly deadly kind, and America will not recover from the use of the Espionage Act as a cudgel to threaten journalists, editors and news outlets with. I call on major funders of Feinstein's and Lieberman's campaigns to put their donations in escrow accounts and notify the staffers of those Senators that the funds will only be released if they drop their traitorous invocation of the Espionage Act. I call on all Americans to understand once for all: this is not about Julian Assange. This, my fellow citizens, is about you.

Those calling for Julian Assange's criminalization [include](#):

1. Rep. Candice Miller
2. Jonah Goldberg, Journalist
3. Christian Whiton, Journalist
4. Bill O'Reilly, Fox News Journalist
5. Sarah Palin, Member of the Republican Party, former candidate
6. Mike Huckabee, Politician
8. Prof. Tom Flanagan
9. Rep. Peter King
10. Tony Shaffer
11. Rick Santorum
12. Rep. Dan Lugen
13. Jeffrey T. Kuhner, Journalist The Washington Times
14. Rep. Virginia Foxx

15. Sen. Kit Bond, Vice Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee
16. Sen. Joe Liberman
17. Sen. Charles Schumer
18. Marc Thiessen, Columnist

Naomi Wolf was born in San Francisco in 1962. She was an undergraduate at Yale University and did her graduate work at New College, Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. Her essays have appeared in various publications including: *The New Republic*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Glamour*, *Ms.*, *Esquire*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. She also speaks widely to groups across the country.

The Huffington Post [Blog Entries](#) by Naomi Wolf

The Huffington Post [home page](#)

Countercurrents [home page](#)

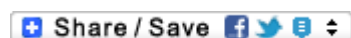
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Justice Department Prepares for Ominous Expansion of "Anti-Terrorism" Law Targeting Activists

by Michael Deutsch [article link](#)

December 11, 2010 | [truthout](#) | News Analysis

Truthout [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:27 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

Randall Amster: The Blog of War

The Blog of War: WikiLeaks Exposes Business-as-Usual, and a New Battle Ensues

by Randall Amster [article link](#)

December 11, 2010 | CommonDreams

In an ideal world, the WikiLeaks revelations would have ended two wars. Documenting patterns of cavalier abuse and untold brutality in Iraq and Afghanistan might have sparked public outrage sufficient to undermine the capacity to continue these campaigns. Instead we've seen the war machine dig in even deeper, extending drawdown deadlines and expanding fronts to adjacent locales. Rather than being in retreat over the WikiLeaks data dump, the Pentagon seems to have become emboldened by the simple fact that a significant portion of its dirty laundry has been aired publicly, and the neighbors have barely uttered a murmur of discontent at the sight.

Even more perversely, WikiLeaks seems to have exacerbated two additional wars rather than ending the ones most clearly in its sights. The first is simply the "war at home," in which the technologies of scanning and surveilling utilized in combat theaters are emplaced domestically under the guise of fighting terrorists. Under the same paltry logic that keeps us indefinitely embroiled in Afghanistan, periodic attempts at impracticable mayhem by disaffected pawns become the basis for a quantum leap in backscatter hardware, security screeds in public places, and the state's increasing interpenetration of our privacy and dignity. By chronicling the perverse lengths to which the U.S. will go in the "war on terror," WikiLeaks has ironically helped to legitimize those actions by adding to their endorsement the imprimatur of public acceptance.

Not only has this led to the tacit approval and domestic deployment of the war machine, but in a feat of suspicious synergy the WikiLeaks controversy has actually spawned a third war. Media outlets everywhere have caught the wave of "cyberterrorists" and a burgeoning "cyberwar" as part of an "Operation Payback" that is ostensibly designed to avenge the mistreatment of Julian Assange and militantly defend the murky concept of "internet freedom." Business Week, for instance, [characterized](#) this as an effort "to wage a cyberwar in WikiLeaks' defense," launched by a terrorist-sounding "shadowy group" with "axis of evil" overtones that is "starting to look like the onset of a global struggle by Web anarchists against the mighty Empire." The socio-cultural import and dramatic nature of such war imagery was not lost on Electronic Frontier Foundation co-founder John Perry Barlow, who unabashedly tweeted in support: "The first serious infowar is now engaged. The field of battle is WikiLeaks. You are the troops."

Interestingly, this purported cyberwar comes at a time when the debate over internet access and regulation is reaching a tipping point. Some [politicians](#) and [pundits](#) have openly called for listing WikiLeaks as a “terrorist organization,” invoking the standard Trojan Horse phrase that is repeatedly used to curtail liberty, justify incursions, and foster interminable conflicts. For their part, the self-described “Anonymous” [hacktivists](#) and avengers of Assange have in many ways fed into this narrative, simultaneously exalting the power of the technological web and throwing down the gauntlet over its privatization and/or regulation: “The internet is the last bastion of freedom in this evolving technical world. The internet is capable of connecting us all. When we are connected we are strong. When we are strong we have power.... This is why the government is moving on WikiLeaks. This is what they fear. They fear our power when we unite.”

The Economist has [documented](#) some of the inner workings of the group, referring to the campaign as more of a “propaganda coup” than a cyberwar – and yet with talk of deploying software tactics such as a “low-orbit ion cannon” and launching missions aimed at “vulnerable targets,” the warlike sensibilities at work here are unmistakable. Another “[inside look](#)” at the hackers’ “hidden world of Internet sabotage” reveals an obsession with “revenge attacks” and vigilante propaganda, and concludes that “the group has declared war against ‘corrupt governments of the world’ and anyone who tries to censor and copyright online information.” In lauding the potentially revolutionary cyber-anarchism of WikiLeaks and the campaign to avenge it (for the record, Assange has [described himself](#) as a proponent of “free market libertarianism” and not as an anarchist), Mother Jones pithily invokes the war ethos in its [call](#) to “bring it on.” The totality of these sentiments and activities has led Secure Computing Magazine to [proclaim](#) a nascent “total cyberwar,” with the Anonymous hackers following suit by [asserting](#) that “we will fire at anyone or anything that tries to censor WikiLeaks.... The major shitstorm has begun.”

While the ostensible motivations of the WikiLeaks hackers may be intended to stand at cross-purposes to the megamilitarism of the war machine, the invocation of similar phrases and motifs raises some troubling issues about the nature of this resistance. More to the point, it engenders concerns over how the response to it will be constructed and deployed. By launching and/or threatening cyberattacks on central financial enterprises such as VISA and MasterCard, on retail pillars like Amazon (which [apparently](#) never quite fully developed as initially planned), and on governmental entities including Swedish prosecutors and various U.S. Senators’ sites, Operation Payback has triangulated its nonlinear efforts on what may be the virtual equivalent of the World Trade Center, at least in terms of symbolic stature. Unfortunately, the post-9/11 era has taught us that any perceived threat to business as usual is going to be met with overwhelming force, and moreover that human rights and civil liberties are likely to be among the myriad casualties.

Such are the ironies of the era in which we live: even antiwar actions and intentions can be fed back into the loop of justifying more war in the process. The military machine appears monolithic on some levels, but it is a good deal more agile and adaptable than is often perceived. On some level, we might plausibly conclude that if entities such as WikiLeaks and its shadowy avengers didn’t exist, the Pentagon would probably have to invent them. To wit: the data contained in the voluminous war logs – and the attendant cables detailing the behind-the-scenes machinations that undergird perpetual warfare – indicate a widespread pattern of official overreaching and international illegality. These sordid details should have been sufficient to erode the ability to wage war, but instead we’ve seen an expansion that now includes cyber-fronts and potential retrenchments on virtual liberties in addition the physical ones already under assault. In this sense, WikiLeaks has perhaps unwittingly provided a base of tacit support for such abuses and an impetus to expand the range of battlefields in the age of perpetual warfare.

In a bygone day, analysts referred to the “fog of war” to encapsulate the moral murkiness and battlefield blurriness attendant to combat zones. Today, however, with the advent of high-tech warfare and the relative transparency of information vis-à-vis WikiLeaks, we can see much more clearly what war does and how it impacts all spheres of our lives. And yet, this potential sense of greater clarity has not brought with it an end to war, but rather a proliferation of it. Whereas the “fog of war” metaphor might cast doubt on the ethics and integrity of the enterprise, today we are experiencing a “blog of war” in which more information sharpens our gaze and thus inculcates us further as accomplices who still choose to suborn the ongoing operations. Thanks to WikiLeaks, we now know exactly what it is that we are blithely dismissing and conveniently ignoring in the collective “pursuit of happiness” that informs the business of our modern lives.

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Why Are Wars Not Being Reported Honestly?

by John Pilger [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Friday, December 10, 2010

F. William Engdahl: Wikileaks: A Big Dangerous US Government Con Job

Wikileaks: A Big Dangerous US Government Con Job

by F. William Engdahl [article link](#)

December 10, 2010 | Global Research

The story on the surface makes for a script for a new Oliver Stone Hollywood thriller. A 39-year old Australian hacker holds the President of the United States and his State Department hostage to a gigantic cyber "leak," unless the President leaves Julian Assange and his Wikileaks free to release hundreds of thousands of pages of sensitive US Government memos. A closer look at the details, so far carefully leaked by the most ultra-establishment of international media such as the New York Times, reveals a clear agenda. That agenda coincidentally serves to buttress the agenda of US geopolitics around the world from Iran to Russia to North Korea. The Wikileaks is a big and dangerous US intelligence Con Job which will likely be used to police the Internet.

It is almost too perfectly-scripted to be true. A discontented 22-year old US Army soldier on duty in Baghdad, Bradley Manning, a low-grade US Army intelligence analyst, described as a loner, a gay in the military, a disgruntled "computer geek," sifts through classified information at Forward Operating Base Hammer. He decides to secretly download US State Department email communications from the entire world over a period of eight months for hours a day, onto his blank CDs while pretending to be listening to Lady Gaga. In addition to diplomatic cables, Manning is believed to have provided WikiLeaks with helicopter gun camera video of an errant US attack in Baghdad on unarmed journalists, and with war logs from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Manning then is supposed to have tracked down a notorious former US computer hacker to get his 250,000 pages of classified US State Department cables out in the Internet for the whole world to see. He allegedly told the US hacker that the documents he had contained "incredible, awful things that belonged in the public domain and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington, DC." The hacker turned him in to US authorities so the story goes. Manning is now incommunicado since months in US military confinement so we cannot ask him, conveniently. The Pentagon routinely hires the best hackers to design their security systems.

Then the plot thickens. The 250,000 pages end up at the desk of Julian Assange, the 39-year-old Australian founder of a supposedly anti-establishment website with the cute name Wikileaks. Assange decides to selectively choose several of the world's most ultra-establishment news media to exclusively handle the leaking job for him as he seems to be on the run from Interpol, not for leaking classified information, but for allegedly having consensual sex with two Swedish women who later decided it was rape.

He selects as exclusive newspapers to decide what is to be leaked the *New York Times* which did such service in promoting faked propaganda against Saddam that led to the Iraqi war, the London *Guardian* and *Der Spiegel*. Assange claims he had no time to sift through so many pages so handed them to the trusted editors of the establishment media for them to decide what should be released. Very “anti-establishment” that. The New York Times even assigned one of its top people, David E. Sanger, to control the release of the Wikileaks material. Sanger is no establishment outsider. He sits as a member of the elite Council on Foreign Relations as well as the Aspen Institute Strategy Group together with the likes of Condi Rice, former Defense Secretary William Perry, former CIA head John Deutch, former State Department Deputy Secretary and now World Bank head Robert Zoellick among others.

Indeed a strange choice of media for a person who claims to be anti-establishment. But then Assange also says he believes the US Government version of 9/11 and calls the Bilderberg Group a normal meeting of people, a very establishment view.

Not so secret cables...

The latest sensational Wikileaks documents allegedly from the US State Department embassies around the world to Washington are definitely not as Hillary Clinton claimed "an attack on America's foreign policy interests that have endangered innocent people." And they do not amount to what the Italian foreign minister, called the "September 11 of world diplomacy." The British government calls them a threat to national security and an aide to Canada's Prime Minister calls on the CIA to assassinate Assange, as does kooky would-be US Presidential hopeful Sarah Palin.

Most important, the 250,000 cables are not "top secret" as we might have thought. Between two and three million US Government employees are cleared to see this level of "secret" document,[1] and some 500,000 people around the world have access to the Secret Internet Protocol Network (SIPRnet) where the cables were stored. Siprnet is not recommended for distribution of top-secret information. Only 6% or 15,000 pages of the documents have been classified as even secret, a level below top-secret. Another 40% were the lowest level, "confidential", while the rest were unclassified. In brief, it was not all that secret.[2]

Most of the revelations so far have been unspectacular. In Germany the revelations led to the removal of a prominent young FDP politician close to Guido Westerwelle who apparently liked to talk too much to his counterpart at the US Embassy. The revelations about Russian politics, that a US Embassy official refers to Putin and Medvedev as “Batman and Robin,” tells more about the cultural level of current US State Department personnel than it does about internal Russian politics.

But for anyone who has studied the craft of intelligence and of disinformation, a clear pattern emerges in the Wikileaks drama. The focus is put on select US geopolitical targets, appearing as Hillary Clinton put it “to justify US sanctions against Iran.” They claim North Korea with China's granting of free passage to Korean ships despite US State Department pleas, send dangerous missiles to Iran. Saudi Arabia's ailing King Abdullah reportedly called Iran's President a Hitler.

Excuse to police the Internet?

What is emerging from all the sound and Wikileaks fury in Washington is that the entire scandal is serving to advance a long-standing Obama and Bush agenda of policing the until-now free Internet. Already the US Government has shut the Wikileaks server in the United States though no identifiable US law has been broken.

The process of policing the Web was well underway before the current leaks scandal. In 2009 Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller and Republican Olympia Snowe introduced the Cybersecurity Act of 2009 (S.773). It would give the President unlimited power to disconnect private-sector computers from the internet. The bill "would allow the president to 'declare a cyber-security emergency' relating to 'non-governmental' computer networks and do what's necessary to respond to the threat." We can expect that now this controversial piece of legislation will get top priority when a new Republican House and the Senate convene in January.

The US Department of Homeland Security, an agency created in the political hysteria following 9/11 2001 that has been compared to the Gestapo, has already begun policing the Internet. They are quietly seizing and shutting down internet websites (web domains) without due process or a proper trial. DHS simply seizes web domains that it wants to and posts an

ominous "Department of Justice" logo on the web site. See an example at <http://torrent-finder.com>. Over 75 websites were seized and shut in a recent week. Right now, their focus is websites that they claim "violate copyrights," yet the torrent-finder.com website that was seized by DHS contained no copyrighted content whatsoever. It was merely a search engine website that linked to destinations where people could access copyrighted content. Step by careful step freedom of speech can be taken away. Then what?

Notes

1. BBCNews, *Siprnet: Where the leaked cables came from*, 29 November, 2010, [accessed here](#).
2. Ken Dilanian, *Inside job: Stolen diplomatic cables show U.S. challenge of stopping authorized users*, Los Angeles Times, November 29, 2010, [accessed here](#).

F. William Engdahl is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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"All-Out Cyber War" Over WikiLeaks

by Brad Friedman [article link](#) [article link](#)
December 08, 2010 | THE BRAD BLOG | Truthout
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CyberJustice Versus Monopoly Justice

by Staff Report [article link](#)
December 10, 2010 | The Daily Bell
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What's Behind the War on WikiLeaks

by Ray McGovern [article link](#)
December 10, 2010 | ICH
Information Clearing House [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:23 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Be Scofield: Wikileaks, Dr. King, and "War Psychosis"](#)

Wikileaks, Dr. King, and "War Psychosis"

by: Be Scofield [article link](#)
December 6th, 2010 | Tikkun Daily

In the wake of the latest Wikileaks releases and the predictable response to them by the powers that be we can look to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as an example of someone who persistently and emphatically rejected the standard fear mongering of the political and media establishment. It wasn't just his powerful critique of the Vietnam War or U.S. foreign policy that deserves attention. We should also remember his explicit distrust of the government fed sound bytes that were designed to evoke base emotions and win popular support for an often illegal and unethical foreign policy. King was so skeptical of his government that he actually advised, "the more difficult but no less necessary task is to speak for those who have been *designated* our enemies" (emphasis added). The tribalistic demonization of entire groups, whether communists or the Vietnamese people was due partly to, King believed, an America gripped by a "war psychosis" that needed to be confronted head on. He stated, "We must demonstrate, teach and preach until the very foundations of our nation shake." And while it is speculation or perhaps an educated guess on my part, I believe King may have viewed Wikileaks as one of those necessary forms of protest.

King left a staunchly anti-Imperialist legacy which questioned the very fabric of the American Empire. From his early days in graduate school King wrote of the dangers of the “[False God of Nationalism](#)” (PDF) which he referred to as a religion.

The watchword of this new religion is “My country right or wrong.” This new religion has its familiar prophets and preachers. In Germany it was preached by Hitler In Italy it was preached by Mussolini [sic]. And in America it is being preached by the McCarthy’s and the Jenners, the advocates of white supremacy, and the America first movements.

The preachers of this new religion are so convinced of its supremacy that they are determined to persecute anyone who does not accept its tenets. And so today many sincere lovers of democracy and believers of the Christian principle are being scorned and persecuted because they will not worship the god of nationalism. We live in an age when it is almost heresy to affirm the brotherhood of man...

According to King the U.S. was the “largest purveyor of violence in the world.” He criticized its economic policies that made possible the racist Apartheid government of South Africa, denounced the use of American military force to crush people power revolutions in Latin America and spoke out against the dangerous pairing of capitalism and the military industrial complex to exploit third world countries. Capitalism according to King had “outlived its usefulness” and was “like a losing football team in the last quarter trying all types of tactics to survive.” The triple evils so perpetuated by the U.S. were poverty, racism and war and he boldly used his public position as a religious and moral leader to speak out against them. He sought to bring a direct challenge to “the deadly Western arrogance that has poisoned the international atmosphere for so long.”

In his critique of the Vietnam War King provided a thorough historical context of the situation to undercut the political myths of his day. He described Ho Chi Minh, the American foe in Vietnam as a selfless and dedicated leader who led a resistance movement against one of many corrupt regimes that the U.S. had propped up. In backing Premier Diem, “our chosen man” in South Vietnam the U.S. “supported one of most vicious modern dictators.” And King acknowledged that our support for Diem came after our previous support for Ky, a mercenary in the French army who thought of Hitler as his greatest hero. He described in detail the U.S. caused death and destruction brought against the Vietnamese institutions of the family and village.

They watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals with at least twenty casualties from American firepower for one Vietcong-inflicted injury. So far we may have killed a million of them, mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers...They must see Americans as strange liberators.

Given the long history of the struggle for freedom by the Vietnamese people he suggested that we seek to understand the feelings of the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front, the group responsible for killing U.S. forces, while not condoning their actions. So egregious was the U.S. intervention and occupation of Vietnam that King drew a parallel between the Vietnam War and the Holocaust, “What do they think as we test our latest weapons on them, just as the Germans tested out new medicine and new tortures in the concentration camps of Europe?” He also employed a rather astute analogy that perhaps he believed would resonate strongly with his fellow Americans. He said our invasion of Vietnam was “as if the French and British had come here during the Civil War to fight with the Confederacy.”

After King delivered his speech “[Beyond Vietnam](#)” on April 4th, 1967 he faced severe backlash from the highest levels of government, the media establishment and even from some of his fellow civil rights colleagues. The American ruling class was threatened by King’s perfectly legal public protests. President Lyndon B. Johnson, a strong ally in the civil rights movement was apparently “flushed with anger” from King’s “Hanoi” line speech and used racial epithets against him. In a personal conversation with King, Johnson told him that his criticisms of the War were equivalent to King telling him that he had raped his daughter. The FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover warned Johnson, “It is clear that he is an instrument in the hands of subversive forces seeking to undermine our nation.” The labels traitor, communist and treasonous were also applied to King by Hoover and some of his agents (as well as many others). Adam Fairclough describes what happened when Johnson supported increased attacks against King, “the Bureau stepped up its attempts to nullify Kings influence by, among other

methods, ‘disseminating’ unfriendly newspaper articles, passing on Bureau-inspired editorials to cooperative editors and publishers, furnishing reporters with ‘embarrassing questions’ for King, and hampering SCLC’s fundraising efforts.”

He also faced antagonism and hostility from the establishment press as the majority of newspapers harshly criticized him, some of which predicted his career over. *Life* magazine editorialized “Much of his speech was demagogic slander that sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi.” The *Washington Post* described King’s speech as “sheer inventions of unsupported fantasy” and said, “Many who have listened to him with respect will never again accord him the same confidence. He has diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country and to his people. And that is a great tragedy.” In an [interview](#) on the Mike Douglass television show which is still particularly relevant today, King faced hostile and somewhat patronizing questions but always responded insightfully. Douglass asked, “Don’t you think your remarks have created doubts about the Negroes loyalty to his country?” King brilliantly answered, “I don’t think our loyalty to the country should be measured by our ability to kill.”

King also warned of encroachments of the 1st amendment right to free speech and increasing government oversight, “If Americans permit thought control, business-control, and freedom-control to continue, we shall surely move within the shadows of fascism.” When Julian Bond was elected to the Georgia legislature in 1965 he was blocked from taking a seat for supporting an SNCC resolution that criticized the war. Both Bond and SNCC were attacked in the press. King came to Bond’s defense stating that the U.S. was “approaching a dangerous totalitarian periphery where dissent becomes synonymous with disloyalty.” He also was concerned that numerous Americans were deeply troubled by U.S. foreign policy but they didn’t “want to be considered unpatriotic” and so remained silent.

King recognized that our invasion of Vietnam, the use of U.S. troops against revolutionary movements in Latin America and our dubious meddling in other countries affairs was “supporting a new form of colonialism...that can only lead to a national disaster.” No amount of firepower could win against the psychological and political defeat that America suffered from its continued reckless and aggressive behaviors. King believed the way to end any hatred and animosity against the U.S. was to address the root of the problem; the “bitter, colossal contest for supremacy” that defined the U.S. Empire. Simply put, King believed America was on the wrong side of the world’s revolutions. In a day when the term communism was the standard tool used for discrediting and demonizing opponents he advised, “We must not engage in anti-Communism...we must with positive action seek to remove those conditions of poverty, insecurity, injustice and racial discrimination.”

Dr. King was assassinated on April 4th, 1968 exactly one year to the date after he delivered his “Beyond Vietnam” speech.

It’s the Threat That Matters, Not the Method

I’ve placed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the context of Wikileaks because it is important to remember that *it’s usually not the form of protest but the damage that can be done to U.S. foreign policy and interests that determines the response from the ruling political and media classes*. If someone had released 250,000 completely benign and superficial diplomatic documents, the act, while being “unacceptable” would most likely illicit a rather negligible response from the powers that be. On the other hand, if someone as powerful as King seeks to “shake the foundations of the nation” and subsequently undermine U.S. foreign policy by only employing perfectly legal means of speech, protest and organizing the highest levels of government will no doubt try to neutralize and destroy him. If either through speech or action you call for a “radical distribution of economic and political power” and think we need to usher in “a new era, which must be an era of revolution” and do so backed with substantial power as King did you will be targeted. The U.S. has a particularly [brutal track record](#) of eliminating and bullying people, leaders, governments and movements that threaten its interests. If Julian Assange had somehow been able to achieve the same worldwide effect as the release of the diplomatic cables has by other more “acceptable” methods I’m quite certain that he would still be America’s #1 public enemy.

My other main point is to illustrate that King, who is a widely respected religious and national figure held opinions which are still labeled as anti-American, treasonous or subversive when expressed today. It’s impossible to begin a conversation in the public sphere without being marginalized that correctly roots the cause of terrorist attacks against the U.S. with its own aggressive, ruthless and Imperialistic global agenda (or any of the other issues he raised). King did exactly that by rejecting the dominant narrative and sympathizing with those designated as our enemies and seeking to understand their motivations.

The images he saw in Ramparts magazine, one of which was of a Vietnamese women holding her dead baby killed by the U.S. made him realize that despite what his government was telling him these people were no enemies of his. He courageously stood up, spoke his conscience and reminded us that “Every man of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits his convictions.”

I hope it's true as the conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer [claims](#) that the Wikileaks release has caused “quite specific damage to our war-fighting capacity.” As the U.S. government continues its illegal wars, occupation of foreign countries, repeated lies, failure to prosecute for torture, and its indefinite imprisonment of people without charge Wikileaks is a form of protest that is much needed in the world today.

We cannot remain silent as our nation engages in one of history's most cruel and senseless wars. During these days of human travail we must encourage creative dissenters. We need them because the thunder of their fearless voices will be the only sound stronger than the blasts of bombs and the clamor of war hysteria... To be honest is to confront the truth, however unpleasant and inconvenient the truth may be. – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Be Scofield is the founder of [God Bless the Whole World](#), a free online resource with hundreds of videos of leading visionaries related to social justice and spirituality. He writes and blogs for Tikkun magazine and his work has appeared on Alternet.org, IntegralWorld and FactNet. Be is pursuing a Master's of Divinity in the Unitarian Universalist tradition from Starr King School for the Ministry.

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Thursday, December 9, 2010

[Ronnie Cummins: The Long March: Steps Toward a Global Uprising](#)

The Long March: Steps Toward a Global Uprising

by Ronnie Cummins [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 9, 2010 | Organic Consumers | CommonDreams

On a beautiful sunny morning, marching down the Avenida Tulúm, our five thousand strong brigade of climate change activists, armed with colorful flags, hats, signs, and banners, supercharged with lively music and drummers, are making our voices heard: "Cambie el sistema, no el clima" (Change the System, not the climate), "El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido" (The people united will never be defeated) and "Obama, Obama respete Cochabamba" (Obama, Obama, respect the Cochabamba Declaration--on the Rights of Mother Earth). One of two simultaneous street demonstrations this morning, we are heading toward the Moon Palace, 15 miles away, where hundreds of heavily armed riot police are lined up behind enormous steel barricades to prevent us from getting within earshot of the Palace, the official headquarters for the United Nation's COP 16 (Congress of the Parties 16) global climate summit.

With black military helicopters (courtesy of the USA) circling overhead, our message to the "business as usual" elite in the Palace is simple: get off your bureaucratic asses and do something. Stop allowing large corporations to use our common atmosphere as an open sewer. Stop cutting down our forests, spraying poisonous pesticides, killing our oceans, and destroying our living soils. Stand aside and let the world's 1.5 billion small farmers, ranchers, and indigenous communities cool off the planet with organic soil management and sustainable grazing and forestry practices. Tax the rich, nationalize the banks, and do whatever is necessary to pay for millions of Green Jobs and public works programs to rebuild our soils and our economic infrastructure. Stop the delaying tactics. Join hands with the global grassroots to retrofit our buildings, our utilities, and our transportation sectors and move away from fossil fuels, or get the hell out of our way.

In our dancing, chanting corps, a veritable rainbow of nationalities and constituencies, I recognize some of the climate warriors I've seen over the last few days at the alternative forums and workshops: Bolivian, Mexican, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, and Native American indigenous people; Mexican campesinos and campesinas (small farmers); Via Campesina members from Asia, North America, Latin America, and Africa; Korean peace advocates; Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Code Pink, and Global Exchange campaigners; the National Family Farm Coalition; anti-globalization militants, Klimaforum delegates; trade union leaders from Canada, the U.S., and Argentina; Council of Canadian activists; student organizers; and comrades from the Organic Consumers Association and Via Organica.

The bitter consensus in workshops and plenary sessions over the past week is that we can't wait for Obama or the industrialized nations to take decisive action. Along with the growing list of governments ready to move forward to reverse global warming (Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Bangladesh, South Africa, several EU nations, and the Island nations of the Pacific) we've got to take matters into our own hands, in our local communities and regions, and build a mass movement larger than any the world has ever seen. As Bill McKibben of 350.org [said today](#) on Democracy Now:

"[The COP 16 Climate Summit meeting here in Cancun is] just like a family reunion aboard the Titanic We can't keep doing this. Until we can build some power outside of these arenas to actually push these guys it's not about how well people are communicating or how great the policy papers are. It's on who has the power. And at the moment, that power rests in the hands of the fossil fuel industry and their allies in governments around the world. And until we build some independent outside movement power to push back, then we're going to get scraps from the table, at the very best."

So how do we take down the climate criminals, Big Oil, Big Coal, Big Agribusiness, Monsanto, and the Military-Industrial Complex? How do we build a fierce and formidable climate conservation corps that can radically alter the dynamics of the marketplace and our suicide economy? How can we mobilize grassroots forces, alternative technology, and progressive public officials to fundamentally change the laws and public policies that are driving us to the brink of disaster? How do we scale up our organic, sustainable, equitable, climate-friendly projects and communities past the "tipping point" so that we become the norm, not just the alternative?

A full battle plan to Save Mother Earth and our climate and life-support systems requires more space than we have today. But here are several steps we need to take as we start our Long March.

Step One: Expand Our Analysis and Broaden Our Coalition

We need to educate a critical mass of the public about the real causes and consequences of global warming so as to inspire and mobilize a grassroots army of hundreds of millions of people armed with practical ideas and confidence. We need to connect the dots and supercharge the synergy between all of our burning issues and Movements (urban and rural Green Jobs for all; retrofitting the economy; stopping the wars for oil and strategic resources in Iraq and Afghanistan; healthy, climate-friendly organic food and farms; drastically reducing fossil fuel use; and environmental and economic justice). We need to break down the walls of the "my issue is more important than your issue" silos.

We need to more clearly identify our adversaries and pinpoint their most vulnerable weaknesses: Big Oil; Big Coal; chemical, genetically modified (GM), and energy-intensive agribusiness and factory farms; transnational timber companies; the Military-Industrial Complex; as well as the financial institutions that fund this Earth and climate-aping Behemoth. At the same time we need to clearly and comprehensively identify our allies: workers and apprentices who can retrofit our fossil fuel economy; organic and green-minded consumers and backyard gardeners; green businesses; environmental, justice, and peace activists; educators; students; churches and religious organizations; and a global army of 1.5 billion small farmers, ranchers, pastoralists, forest dwellers, and indigenous people. As a banner on the march says today "Campesinos y Campesinas Enfrian el Planeta." (Small farmers are cooling off the planet).

We need to educate (and shout when necessary) that there is already 435 ppm (parts per million) of three major greenhouse gases polluting the atmosphere, heating up the earth, killing the oceans, melting the glaciers and polar icecaps, and destabilizing the climate. We need to name these gases over and over again-Carbon dioxide (CO₂); Methane (CH₄); and

Nitrous oxide (N₂O); explain exactly where they come from; and then point out how we can drastically curtail and organically sequester these emissions utilizing organic farm and land management and rotational grazing.

Carbon Dioxide Pollution: 800 Gigaton Carbon Gorilla in the Atmosphere

CO₂ pollution (76% of all greenhouse gas pollution) comes from burning fossil fuels (in buildings, cars, industry, and most of all in our industrial food system) cutting down forests, draining wetlands, and destroying the soil and ocean's natural capacities to sequester billions of tons of excess greenhouse gases. How do we reduce CO₂ emissions as rapidly as possible? Stop building coal plants, stop tar sands and gas shale production, stop deepwater oil exploration, increase energy efficiency, retrofit buildings, ban factory farms, and slap a carbon tax on fossil fuel use that makes the polluters pay.

For a more in-depth discussion see: [article link](#)

How can a global alliance of food (and fiber) consumers and food and fiber producers literally suck down a significant proportion (50 ppm) of the excess CO₂ that's already up in the atmosphere? Through organic and sustainable farming, grazing, and forest practices. Organic soil management on a significant proportion of the world's 12 billion acres of farm land and pasture/grazing land can sequester up to 7,000 pounds of CO₂ per acre per year and lock this excess carbon naturally in the soil, where it belongs. This Great Transition to organic farming and rotational grazing, coupled with the defense and restoration of the world's 10 billion acres of forests and wetlands, can buy us the precious time we need to retrofit our economies and make the Great Transition to alternative solar, wind, and geothermal energy.

Methane: Food Inc. and Waste Management's Climate Killer

Methane (CH₄) is a greenhouse gas that makes up approximately 14% of human-induced global warming. Per ton, released into the atmosphere, methane is 72 times more destructive than CO₂. The good news about methane is that if we stop releasing it into the atmosphere, the 65 ppm already up there will quickly dissipate, unlike carbon dioxide (which is more long-lasting) or nitrous oxide (which for all practical purposes is permanent). Where does methane pollution come from, and how can we get rid of it? Methane pollution mainly comes from factory farms and the overproduction and over consumption of non-organic, non-grass-fed, non-grass-finished meat and animal products; from throwing hundreds of millions of tons of rotting food, paper, and lawn wastes into our garbage cans and landfills, instead of composting them for use on farms, ranches, and gardens; destruction of wetlands for shrimp and fish farms, industrial agriculture, urban development or sprawl; and industrial, chemical-intensive rice farming.

How do we get rid of excess methane? We must build massive consumer awareness that it is a "climate crime" to buy or consume meat, animal products, or any food whatsoever that comes from a factory farm or feedlot. At the same time we must educate consumers that organically managed small farms and ranches are actually greenhouse gas sequestration centers, arguably our most important allies in cooling off the planet.

In addition to boycotting any and all of the products of Food Inc. we must create "Zero Waste" households, businesses, and municipalities, not just through voluntary action, but more importantly by passing laws requiring mandatory separation and composting of all food and yard wastes. One major city in the U.S. that has already done this is San Francisco. Mandatory separation and composting of food wastes not only drastically reduces methane emissions from garbage dumps or landfills; but also creates an enormous amount of compost which farmers, ranchers, gardeners, and landscapers can then use (along with the organic concentrated liquid form of compost called "compost tea"). This will create the preconditions to replace the 12 billion pounds of deadly nitrate fertilizers that are dumped on the U.S.'s already ravaged and eroded soils every year.

Nitrous Oxide: Taking Down the Global Chemical Fertilizer Corporations Before They Kill Us All

Human-induced releases of nitrous oxide (N₂O) make up 10% of all the greenhouse gases that are causing global warming. Excess nitrous oxide per ton in the atmosphere is 300 times more destructive than CO₂ and unfortunately, for the present and future generations, will remain there almost permanently. Two-thirds of all N₂O emissions arise from the use of nitrate fertilizers on Genetically Modified (GM) and chemical-intensive industrial farms. And of course the main crops of these

fossil fuel-guzzling industrial farms are billions of tons of (pesticide and GMO-tainted) animal feed for use on factory farms or feedlots.

Nitrous oxide is extremely hazardous. It depletes the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere (thereby increasing skin cancer for humans). It increases ozone pollution levels at the ground level (fueling the current epidemic of asthma and respiratory diseases.) Poisonous nitrate fertilizers leaching into our rural wells and municipal drinking water supplies (where it combines into a super-toxic brew with pesticides) are a biological time bomb, a major cause of cancer, infertility, hormone disruption, and birth defects. Nitrate fertilizer runoff into our rivers and streams kills fish and marine life and is directly responsible for the hundreds of dead zones in our oceans, the most famous of which is the enormous dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

Perhaps most deadly of all, nitrate fertilizer kills our living soils and microorganisms, decreasing their ability to sequester (through plant photosynthesis) excess CO₂ in the soil. Even after six decades of industrial agriculture dumping hundreds of billions of pounds of chemical fertilizers on farmlands, our living soils still contain two to three times as much carbon as the atmosphere, with the practical capacity to clean and safely sequester at least 50 ppm of greenhouse gases over the next 40 years. In other words, our living soils can save us—but only if we can stop the widespread use of nitrate fertilizers, GMO crops, and pesticides and replace these deadly chemicals and mutant organisms with organic compost and compost tea, and cover crops—augmented by the biological power and fertility generated by carefully planned, high-density rotational grazing of animals.

The energy-intensive manufacturing of nitrate fertilizers requires the use of massive amounts of natural gas, a resource in short supply, that will increasingly be needed to take us through the transition from fossil fuels to alternative energy. We can no longer afford to waste natural gas in order to uphold the profits of Cargill, Monsanto, and Food Inc.

So how do we get rid of nitrous oxide pollution? Similar to our phasing-out of methane emissions, we need a global boycott of factory farms, foods, and fibers derived from chemical pesticides, GMOs, and nitrate fertilizers. We need a million new organic, carbon-sequestering farms and ranches that feed the soil with organic compost, organic tea, animal manure, and cover crops instead of nitrate fertilizer. We need ten million more backyard and community gardens to feed ourselves locally and organically. We need mandatory composting laws so that all of our 100 billion plus tons of food and yard waste every year are transformed into organic compost and compost tea. We need to spread the word that corporate agribusiness, factory farms, and the chemical fertilizer industry are climate criminals. We either "sunset" them or they're going to sunset us.

Moving from Gloom and Doom to Green Solutions and Green Jobs

People are desperate and hungry for hope. People are desperate and hungry for jobs and a sense of meaning and mission. We in the Movement must consciously change the tone of our gloom and doom messages to emphasize the practical solutions and socio-economic benefits that we have to offer: green jobs, healthy food, climate stability, sustainability, peace, and a revitalized democracy. For the most part we don't need to invent new technologies. The tools and techniques and labor power we need are already here, although in many cases they exist only in embryonic form, in our local regions. Solar and wind technology, super-efficient and deep-retrofitted homes and commercial buildings. Organic farms, ranches, restored riparian zones and wetlands and urban gardens. Urban mass transportation, ride share and carpool systems, bike and walking paths, farmers markets, urban greenhouses. Rooftop gardens. Organic gardening and cooking classes. Financial mechanisms like Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE), community credit unions, and "Slow Money" cooperatives. We can and must cool off the planet, but luckily we have pilot projects and "best practices" and climate-friendly laws and policies that we show people right now, from Main Street and our local organic farms or ranches to green buildings, composting toilets, and farmers markets in Manhattan.

We need in short, a Green New Deal, comparable in scope to the New Deal of the 1930s that helped lift the U.S. out of economic depression. Since we don't have the political power right now to force Obama and the Congress to implement a massive Green Jobs and Climate Conservation Corps program at the federal level, let's go local instead. Let's build political power and a series of mini-Green New Deals at the city, county and state levels.

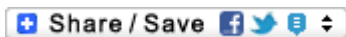
And as we move to phase-out fossil fuels and the fossil fuels industry, let's make sure that we take care of the workers and the blue-collar communities where these industries are located. For every job lost in the fossil fuel economy, in industrial agriculture, and the military industrial complex, we must create two jobs in the urban and rural organic and Green Jobs sector. When China, Europe, and the rest of the world eventually slap a carbon taxes on our exports, then maybe we'll see a carbon tax on greenhouse gas emissions here in the U.S. If we do implement a Carbon Tax that gradually but steadily raises the prices of fossil fuel energy, let's make sure that poor people and the middle class get reduced payroll taxes to make up the difference. Let the polluter pay.

So let's roll up our sleeves and get to work in our local communities. Roll out pilot projects and "structural reform" campaigns that are (a) radical but winnable; (b) that have the potential to educate and mobilize large numbers of people; (c) that build new and broader coalitions; and (d) that slowly but steadily begin to build and expand our political power. Let's point out the problems, but also point out the organic and green solutions that are already taking root.

Early in 2011, my organization, the Organic Consumers Association, joined by our labor and climate action allies, plans to launch a 20+ city campaign to take down the methane and nitrous oxide climate criminals, to build a Movement for Zero Waste and organic soil management that will hopefully mark the beginning of the end for industrial agriculture, factory farms, and the so-called Solid Waste Industry. Stay tuned for details, but please send an email information@organicconsumers.org if you're interesting in helping organize such a campaign in your local community. In the meantime I hope to see you in the streets and the suites raising hell about Big Oil, Big Coal, Big Ag, Big Unemployment, and Endless War. Power to the people!

Ronnie Cummins is a lifetime activist and populist hell-raiser. He is the International Director of the [Organic Consumers Association](#) and its Mexico affiliate, [Via Organica](#).

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Wednesday, December 8, 2010

Murray Dobbin: The Deadly, Unforeseen Consequences of Social Inequality

The Deadly, Unforeseen Consequences of Social Inequality

by Murray Dobbin [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 7, 2010 | Murray Dobbin | Global Research

Last May, the [OECD put out figures](#) comparing infant mortality rates in countries around the world. Perhaps the biggest story of all the figures were those attributed to Canada. This country has always boasted of its social stats — life expectancy, infant mortality, university graduates, and other measures of our success as a nation.

But not this time.

The numbers were “shocking” — a word used by half a dozen prominent commentators, including the Conference Board of Canada. We had slipped from sixth place in the world to 24, a virtually unprecedented fall for any country. We are now just above Poland and Hungary, with 5.1 deaths per 1,000 live births of infants less than one year of age. The actual tragedy beyond the percentages: 1,181 infant deaths in 2007.

There were no quotes from the parents of those infants who had died, but there was an outpouring of shock and much speculation about the reasons. The drop in ranking below the countries in the top ten — the northern European nations, Japan, Australia — prompted the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada to push for a national birthing strategy. Others were convinced it was how Canada deals with premature births.

But the answer might lie elsewhere, and a recent book on the deadly and profound consequences of income inequality sheds light on just what has gone wrong in Canada. [The Spirit Level](#) sounds like anything but a scientific book, but in fact its authors Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett bring to bear some of the most thorough scientific studies on the effects of economic inequality ever assembled in one place.

It makes for an incredible read, and has the potential to completely transform our attitude towards inequality and its multifaceted impact on society.

Rise of the top one per cent

What gives it even more potential to change the way we think about issues like infant mortality is a recent study the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) authored by senior economist Armine Yalnizyan. It is no secret that Canada, following the pattern of the U.S. and other English-speaking developed nations, has been getting less and less equal over the past couple of decades. But the numbers are shocking — indeed a perfect match for the numbers regarding infant mortality. What [The Spirit Level](#) establishes is that the latter tracks the former.

The CCPA study, [The Rise of Canada's Richest 1%](#) (the 246,000 privileged few whose average income is \$405,000), reveals that this group of Canada's wealthiest citizens took home almost a third of all income growth during the decade from 1997 to 2007. According to Yalnizyan: “That's a bigger piece of the action than any other generation of rich Canadians has taken. The last time Canada's elite held so much of the nation's income in their hands was in the 1920s.” The top one per cent pocketed 13.8 per cent of all personal income by 2007, levels virtually identical to the mid 1920s.

The richer you are, the richer you get. According to the study: “The richest one per cent has seen its share of total income double, the richest 0.1 per cent has seen its share almost triple, and the richest 0.01 per cent has seen its share more than quintuple since the late 1970s.”

A new Gilded Age

We have come full circle since the mid-1920s. During the post-war decades of our so-called golden age (economic growth and the growth of democratic government through progressive taxation), the share of the richest one per cent steadily declined, until it reached 7.7 per cent in 1977. The middle class and working class increased their share of that new wealth as unionization and a politically engaged citizenry demanded it. Then the wealthy's share started its upward climb again, as the free-market policies of the Washington consensus began to be imposed. And, of course, that is precisely what these policies were intended to do: further enrich the rich and beggar the activist state.

And if you think that incomes are unequal, when it comes to [the distribution of accumulated financial wealth](#) the numbers are truly staggering. By the end of 2009, 3.8 per cent of Canadian households controlled \$1.78 trillion dollars of financial wealth, or 67 per cent of the total.

Part of the explanation of this extraordinary and rapid growth of inequality arises from simple but massive increase in income for those at the top. But another part of the picture is the extraordinary tax cuts that the wealthiest Canadians have enjoyed since the early 1980s. Between 1948 (when top marginal rates were as high as 80 per cent) and 2000, the tax rate on the wealthy has been cut in half, according to Yalnizyan. And since then, there have been two additional sets of massive

tax cuts — those in 2000 by Paul Martin and by the Harper Conservatives. “Between 1990 and 2005, the richest one per cent experienced twice the reduction in taxes as the average Canadian.” By 2005, taking all taxes into account, the richest one per cent of taxpayers was taxed at a slightly lower rate than the poorest ten per cent.

While the rich and super-rich have been getting richer due to a number of factors, the middle and working classes have been going in the opposite direction. [A 2008 Statscan study](#) revealed that median earnings of full time employees in Canada were completely flat from 1980 to 2005. In that time period, the real increase in yearly median income (in inflation-adjusted dollars) was \$53. In that 25 year period, the income of the richest fifth of Canadians grew 16.4 per cent, while the poorest fifth saw their earnings decline by 20.6 per cent. This, too, was not accidental, but largely a result of government policies. Beginning in the eighties and accelerating in the 1990s, so-called “labour-flexibility” policies drove down the incomes of the middle class and the bargaining power of labour generally.

But what does this have to do with our now-appalling record on infant mortality? The authors of *The Spirit Level* present compelling evidence that income inequality has an impact on virtually all the kinds of statistics which measure a nation’s success — not just social stats but economic ones like innovation, productivity, and economic stability. The range of factors that can be linked directly to inequality is amazing. The chapter titles tell the story: mental health and drug use, physical health and life expectancy, obesity, educational performance, teen births, violence, imprisonment and punishment, social mobility — all correlate to how equal incomes are in a given country.

Wealth does not equal health

And these are the results of inequality within a nation — not between nations, not just the relative wealth of a society. Less wealthy societies that are more equal do better. Indeed, when the World Wildlife Fund matched the UN Human Development Index with a measure of ecological sustainability, only Cuba, nominally a poor country, made the grade.

Some of the numbers are counter-intuitive: the conventional wisdom suggests that innovation is promoted by vigorous competition and high monetary reward. Not so. The most equal societies are also the most innovative (the U.S. and Canada are at the bottom in terms of patents per million population amongst developed nations).

In more equal societies, people work less (workers in Canada and the U.S. work hundreds of hours more a year than their counterparts in more-equal northern European countries) because their more equal incomes are adequate to their needs. More equal societies even recycle a higher proportion of their waste. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is also direct correlation between equality and a high percentage of unionized workers. Unionization rates in Canada have declined by nearly half since the 1960s.

What is perhaps most disturbing about this story is that we know that income much beyond that needed for basic comforts does not bring happiness. *The Spirit Level* cites a study that demonstrates we pursue higher income for status reasons, not happiness. “People were asked to say whether they’d prefer to be less well-off than others in a rich society, or have a much lower income in a poorer society but be better off than others. Fifty per cent of participants thought they would trade as much as half their real income if they could live in a society in which they would be better off than others.”

[In a U.S. survey](#) (pdf), participants were asked to look at three unidentified pie charts with different divisions of wealth going to 20 per cent chunks of the population. One chart showed wealth distributed equally, another showed the actual U.S. division, and a third showed the Swedish reality. When asked which their ideal chart was, fully 92 per cent of Americans chose the Swedish model — including 90.2 per cent of those who voted for Bush. In Sweden, the wealthiest 20 per cent own only 32 per cent of the wealth, compared to the U.S. where they hold 84 per cent.

These surveys suggest that even the wealthy think we should be more equal. If so, who is to blame for this appalling and destructive trend? If it’s just ideology, and I suspect that’s a big part of the explanation, then surely we are sophisticated enough to get beyond it and decide that we want a more equal society. And fewer infants dying unnecessary deaths.

Murray Dobbin is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:36 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Robert Scheer: From Jefferson to Assange

From Jefferson to Assange

by Robert Scheer [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 8, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

All you need to know about Julian Assange's value as a crusading journalist is that The New York Times and most of the world's other leading newspapers have led daily with important news stories based on his WikiLeaks releases. All you need to know about the collapse of traditional support for the constitutional protection of a free press is that Dianne Feinstein, the centrist Democrat who chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee, has called for Assange "to be vigorously prosecuted for espionage."

Writing in The Wall Street Journal, Feinstein, who strongly supported the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, has the audacity to call for the imprisonment of the man who, more than any other individual, has allowed the public to learn the truth about those disastrous imperial adventures—facts long known to Feinstein as head of the Intelligence Committee but never shared with the public she claims to represent.

Feinstein represents precisely the government that Thomas Jefferson had in mind when he said, in defense of unfettered freedom of the press, "[W]ere it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

In the 1787 letter in which he wrote those words, Jefferson was reflecting the deep wisdom of a political leader who often had been excoriated by a vicious press that would make the anarchist-inflected comments of an Assange seem mild in comparison. More than 35 years later, after having suffered many more vitriolic press attacks, Jefferson reiterated his belief in a free press, in all its vagaries, as the foundation of a democracy. In an 1823 letter to Lafayette, Jefferson warned: "The only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted to be freely expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure."

It is precisely that agitation that so alarms Feinstein, for the inconvenient truths she has concealed in her Senate role would have indeed shocked many of those who voted for her. She knew in real time that Iraq had nothing to do with the 9/11 attack, yet she voted to send young Americans to kill and be killed based on what she knew to be lies. It is her duplicity, along with the leaders of both political parties, that now stands exposed by the WikiLeaks documents.

That is why U.S. governmental leaders will now employ the massive power of the state to discredit and destroy Assange, who dared let the public in on the depths of official deceit—a deceit that they hide behind in making their claims of protecting national security. Claims mocked by released cables that show that our puppets in Iraq and Afghanistan are deeply corrupt and anti-democratic, and that al-Qaida continues to find its base of support not in those countries but rather in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, the very nations we arm and protect. The notion that the official tissue of lies enhances our security is rejected by the growing strength of radical Islam in the region, as evidenced by the success of Iran, the main benefactor of our invasion of Iraq, as the leaked cables make clear.

The pretend patriots who use the national security argument to gut what remains of our most important security asset—our constitutional guarantees of a truly free press—are just what President George Washington feared when in his farewell address he warned "against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the Impostures of pretended patriotism. ..."

The pretended patriotism of Feinstein, the first Democrat to co-sponsor the bill extending the U.S. Patriot Act, represents the death of the Democratic Party as a protector of our freedoms. As a California resident, I will not vote for her again, no matter how dastardly a right-wing Republican opponent she might face. There is no lesser evil to be found in one who would so cavalierly imprison practitioners of a free press.

That is the issue here, pure and simple. It is unconscionable to target Assange for publishing documents on the Internet that mainstream media outlets have attested had legitimate news value. As in the historic case in which Daniel Ellsberg gave The New York Times the Pentagon Papers exposé of the official lies justifying the Vietnam War, Assange is acting as the reporter here, and thus his activities must be shielded by the First Amendment's guarantee of journalistic freedom.

Actually Ellsberg's position, as morally strong as it was, was weaker than that of Assange, in that the former Marine and top Pentagon adviser was working at the government-funded Rand Corp., where he had agreed to rules about the handling of classified information, including the Pentagon Papers. Assange operates under no such restraints and is an even clearer example of the journalist who ferrets out news and attempts to report it. He had no special clearance that provided him access, and what he did was no different from what the editors of The New York Times did in publishing news that was fit to print.

It is outrageous for any journalist, or respector of what every American president has claimed is our inalienable, God-given right to a free press, not to join in Assange's defense on this issue, as distinct from what increasingly appear to be trumped-up charges that led to his voluntary arrest on Tuesday in London in a case involving his personal behavior. Abandon Assange and you abandon the bedrock of our republic: the public's right to know.

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Robert Scheer is editor of Truthdig.com and a regular columnist for The San Francisco Chronicle.

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[Chris Floyd: The Arrest Of Julian Assange: Truth In Chains](#)

The Arrest Of Julian Assange: Truth In Chains

By Chris Floyd [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 07, 2010 | Empire Burlesque | CounterPunch | ICH

Well, they got him at last. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, the target of several of the world's most powerful governments, turned himself into British authorities today and is now at the mercy of state authorities who have already shown their wolfish – and lawless – desire to destroy him and his organization.

It has been, by any standard, an extraordinary campaign of vilification and persecution, wholly comparable to the kind of treatment doled out to dissidents in China or Burma. Lest we forget, WikiLeaks is a journalistic outlet – just like The New York Times, the Guardian and Der Spiegel, all of whom are even now publishing the very same material – leaked classified documents -- available on WikiLeaks. The website is also a journalistic outlet just like CNN, ABC, CBS, Fox and other mainstream media venues, where we have seen an endless parade of officials – and journalists! – calling for Assange to be prosecuted or killed outright. Every argument being made for shutting down WikiLeaks can – and doubtless will – be used against any journalistic enterprise that publishes material that powerful people do not like.

And the leading role in this persecution of truth-telling is being played by the administration of the great progressive agent of hope and change, the self-proclaimed heir of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, the winner of the Nobel Peace

Prize, Barack Obama. His attorney general, Eric Holder, is now making fierce noises about the “steps” he has already taken to bring down WikiLeaks and criminalize the leaking of embarrassing information. And listen to the ferocious reaction of that liberal lioness, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who took to the pages of Rupert Murdoch’s Wall Street Journal to call for Assange to be put in prison – for 2,500,000 years:

"When WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange released his latest document trove—more than 250,000 secret State Department cables—he intentionally harmed the U.S. government. The release of these documents damages our national interests and puts innocent lives at risk. He should be vigorously prosecuted for espionage."

"The law Mr. Assange continues to violate is the Espionage Act of 1917. That law makes it a felony for an unauthorized person to possess or transmit "information relating to the national defense which information the possessor has reason to believe could be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of any foreign nation." ... Importantly, the courts have held that "information relating to the national defense" applies to both classified and unclassified material. Each violation is punishable by up to 10 years in prison."

So there you have it. Ten years for each offense; 250,000 separate offenses; thus a prison term of 2.5 million years. Naturally, tomorrow the same newspaper will denounce Feinstein for being such a namby-pamby terrorist-coddling pinko: “Why didn’t she call for Assange to be torn from limb to limb by wild dogs, as any right-thinking red-blooded American would do!?”

Meanwhile, corporate America and its international allies continue to do their bit. Joining PayPal and Amazon, who had already cut off their services to WikiLeaks, most of the remaining venues through which the internet journal is funded are also freezing out the organization -- MasterCard, Visa, and a Swiss bank that WikiLeaks used to process donations. All of these organizations are obviously responding to government pressure.

What is perhaps most remarkable is that this joint action by the world elite to shut down WikiLeaks – which has been operating for four years – comes after the release of diplomatic cables, not in response to earlier leaks which provided detailed evidence of crimes and atrocities committed by the perpetrators and continuers of Washington’s Terror War. I suppose this is because the diplomatic cables have upset the smooth running of the corrupt and cynical backroom operations that actually govern our world, behind the ludicrous lies and self-righteous posturing that our great and good lay on for the public. They didn’t mind being unmasked as accomplices in mass murder and fomenters of suffering and hatred; in fact, they were rather proud of it. And they certainly knew that their fellow corruptocrats in foreign governments – not to mention the perpetually stunned and supine American people – wouldn’t give a toss about a bunch of worthless peons in Iraq and Afghanistan getting killed. But the diplomatic cables have caused an embarrassing stink among the closed little clique of the movers and shakers. And that is a crime deserving of vast eons in stir – or death.

But before Assange was taken into custody, he fired off one last message to the world, in The Australian, a newspaper in his native land. With supreme irony, he tied WikiLeaks’ operation to the roots of the Murdoch media empire, which began by speaking truth to murderous and wasteful power – and now, of course, is one of the most powerful and assiduous instruments of murderous and wasteful power itself. Assange writes:

"IN 1958 a young Rupert Murdoch, then owner and editor of Adelaide's The News, wrote: "In the race between secrecy and truth, it seems inevitable that truth will always win." His observation perhaps reflected his father Keith Murdoch's expose that Australian troops were being needlessly sacrificed by incompetent British commanders on the shores of Gallipoli. The British tried to shut him up but Keith Murdoch would not be silenced and his efforts led to the termination of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign."

"Nearly a century later, WikiLeaks is also fearlessly publishing facts that need to be made public. ... Democratic societies need a strong media and WikiLeaks is part of that media. The media helps keep government honest. WikiLeaks has revealed some hard truths about the Iraq and Afghan wars, and broken stories about corporate corruption."

"WikiLeaks is not the only publisher of the US embassy cables. Other media outlets, including Britain's The Guardian, The New York Times, El Pais in Spain and Der Spiegel in Germany have published the same redacted cables."

"Yet it is WikiLeaks, as the co-ordinator of these other groups, that has copped the most vicious attacks and accusations from the US government and its acolytes. I have been accused of treason, even though I am an Australian, not a US citizen. There have been dozens of serious calls in the US for me to be "taken out" by US Special Forces. Sarah Palin says I should be "hunted down like Osama bin Laden", a Republican bill sits before the US Senate seeking to have me declared a "transnational threat" and disposed of accordingly. An adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister's office has called on national television for me to be assassinated. An American blogger has called for my 20-year-old son, here in Australia, to be kidnapped and harmed for no other reason than to get at me."

These, of course, are the defenders of Western Civilization, that pinnacle of human progress, that bulwark against savagery like murder and torture, that bastion of temperance and reason. But in his piece, Assange once more gives the lie to the ferocious canards of Feinstein, Holder, Obama and Palin about the "great harm" the leaks have done:

"WikiLeaks has a four-year publishing history. During that time we have changed whole governments, but not a single person, as far as anyone is aware, has been harmed. But the US, with Australian government connivance, has killed thousands in the past few months alone."

"US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates admitted in a letter to the US congress that no sensitive intelligence sources or methods had been compromised by the Afghan war logs disclosure. The Pentagon stated there was no evidence the WikiLeaks reports had led to anyone being harmed in Afghanistan. NATO in Kabul told CNN it couldn't find a single person who needed protecting. The Australian Department of Defence said the same. No Australian troops or sources have been hurt by anything we have published."

Yes, how many thousands of people, how many tens of thousands, have been killed by our bipartisan Terror Warriors in the four years of WikiLeaks' existence? How many millions have been "harmed" not only by the direct operations of the Terror War, but by the ever-widening, ever-deepening violence, hatred and turmoil it is spreading throughout the world? (Not to mention the accelerating collapse of American society, which has been financially, politically and morally bankrupted by the acceptance of aggressive war, torture, elite rapine and authoritarian rule.)

But none of the perpetrators of these acts, past or present, are in jail, or have even been prosecuted, or investigated, or inconvenienced in any way. Yet Assange is in a British prison tonight – and it is certainly not for the "sexual misconduct" charges that were filed against him in August, which then became the basis of an unprecedented worldwide arrest order of the type ordinarily reserved for war criminals – for those, in fact, accused of aggressive war, torture, elite rapine and authoritarian rule. The judge refused to grant bail, saying that Assange had "access to financial means" and could flee the country – perhaps a bitter joke on milord's part, aimed at a man whose means of financial support are being systematically shut down by the most powerful government and corporate forces in the world. Journalist John Pilger and filmmaker Ken Loach were among those who appeared in court ready to stand surety for Assange, but to no avail.

WikiLeaks will doubtless try to struggle on. And Assange says he has given the entire diplomatic trove to 100,000 people. By dribs and drabs, shards of truth will get out. But the world's journalists – and those persons of conscience working in the world's governments – have been given a hard, harsh, unmistakable lesson in the new realities of our degraded time. Tell a truth that discomforts power, that challenges its domination over our lives, our discourse, our very thoughts, and you will be destroyed. No institution, public or private, will stand with you; the most powerful entities, public and private, will be arrayed against you, backed up by overwhelming violent force. This is where we are now. This is what we are now.

Chris Floyd is an American writer and frequent contributor to CounterPunch. His blog is [Empire Burlesque](#).

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Julian Assange's Real Crime: Making It Difficult for America to Wage Superpower

By Kevin Gosztola [article link](#)

December 7, 2010 | OpEdNews

Wiki-Leaks - Handle With Care

By Joe Quinn [article link](#)

December 8, 2010 | OpEdNews

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:15 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

[Julian Assange: The Truth Will Always Win](#)

The Truth Will Always Win

by Julian Assange [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 7, 2010 | The Australian | CommonDreams

In 1958 a young Rupert Murdoch, then owner and editor of Adelaide's The News, wrote: "In the race between secrecy and truth, it seems inevitable that truth will always win."

His observation perhaps reflected his father Keith Murdoch's expose that Australian troops were being needlessly sacrificed by incompetent British commanders on the shores of Gallipoli. The British tried to shut him up but Keith Murdoch would not be silenced and his efforts led to the termination of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign.

Nearly a century later, WikiLeaks is also fearlessly publishing facts that need to be made public.

I grew up in a Queensland country town where people spoke their minds bluntly. They distrusted big government as something that could be corrupted if not watched carefully. The dark days of corruption in the Queensland government before the Fitzgerald inquiry are testimony to what happens when the politicians gag the media from reporting the truth.

These things have stayed with me. WikiLeaks was created around these core values. The idea, conceived in Australia, was to use internet technologies in new ways to report the truth.

WikiLeaks coined a new type of journalism: scientific journalism. We work with other media outlets to bring people the news, but also to prove it is true. Scientific journalism allows you to read a news story, then to click online to see the original document it is based on. That way you can judge for yourself: Is the story true? Did the journalist report it accurately?

Democratic societies need a strong media and WikiLeaks is part of that media. The media helps keep government honest. WikiLeaks has revealed some hard truths about the Iraq and Afghan wars, and broken stories about corporate corruption.

People have said I am anti-war: for the record, I am not. Sometimes nations need to go to war, and there are just wars. But there is nothing more wrong than a government lying to its people about those wars, then asking these same citizens to put their lives and their taxes on the line for those lies. If a war is justified, then tell the truth and the people will decide whether to support it.

If you have read any of the Afghan or Iraq war logs, any of the US embassy cables or any of the stories about the things WikiLeaks has reported, consider how important it is for all media to be able to report these things freely.

WikiLeaks is not the only publisher of the US embassy cables. Other media outlets, including Britain 's The Guardian, The New York Times, El Pais in Spain and Der Spiegel in Germany have published the same redacted cables.

Yet it is WikiLeaks, as the co-ordinator of these other groups, that has copped the most vicious attacks and accusations from the US government and its acolytes. I have been accused of treason, even though I am an Australian, not a US, citizen. There have been dozens of serious calls in the US for me to be "taken out" by US special forces. Sarah Palin says I should be "hunted down like Osama bin Laden", a Republican bill sits before the US Senate seeking to have me declared a "transnational threat" and disposed of accordingly. An adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister's office has called on national television for me to be assassinated. An American blogger has called for my 20-year-old son, here in Australia, to be kidnapped and harmed for no other reason than to get at me.

And Australians should observe with no pride the disgraceful pandering to these sentiments by Prime Minister Gillard and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have not had a word of criticism for the other media organisations. That is because The Guardian, The New York Times and Der Spiegel are old and large, while WikiLeaks is as yet young and small.

We are the underdogs. The Gillard government is trying to shoot the messenger because it doesn't want the truth revealed, including information about its own diplomatic and political dealings.

Has there been any response from the Australian government to the numerous public threats of violence against me and other WikiLeaks personnel? One might have thought an Australian prime minister would be defending her citizens against such things, but there have only been wholly unsubstantiated claims of illegality. The Prime Minister and especially the Attorney-General are meant to carry out their duties with dignity and above the fray. Rest assured, these two mean to save their own skins. They will not.

Every time WikiLeaks publishes the truth about abuses committed by US agencies, Australian politicians chant a provably false chorus with the State Department: "You'll risk lives! National security! You'll endanger troops!" Then they say there is nothing of importance in what WikiLeaks publishes. It can't be both. Which is it?

It is neither. WikiLeaks has a four-year publishing history. During that time we have changed whole governments, but not a single person, as far as anyone is aware, has been harmed. But the US, with Australian government connivance, has killed thousands in the past few months alone.

US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates admitted in a letter to the US congress that no sensitive intelligence sources or methods had been compromised by the Afghan war logs disclosure. The Pentagon stated there was no evidence the WikiLeaks reports had led to anyone being harmed in Afghanistan. NATO in Kabul told CNN it couldn't find a single person who needed protecting. The Australian Department of Defence said the same. No Australian troops or sources have been hurt by anything we have published.

But our publications have been far from unimportant. The US diplomatic cables reveal some startling facts:

The US asked its diplomats to steal personal human material and information from UN officials and human rights groups, including DNA, fingerprints, iris scans, credit card numbers, internet passwords and ID photos, in violation of international treaties. Presumably Australian UN diplomats may be targeted, too.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia asked the US Officials in Jordan and Bahrain want Iran 's nuclear program stopped by any means available.

Britain's Iraq inquiry was fixed to protect "US interests".

Sweden is a covert member of NATO and US intelligence sharing is kept from parliament.

The US is playing hardball to get other countries to take freed detainees from Guantanamo Bay. Barack Obama agreed to meet the Slovenian President only if Slovenia took a prisoner. Our Pacific neighbour Kiribati was offered millions of dollars to accept detainees.

In its landmark ruling in the Pentagon Papers case, the US Supreme Court said "only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government". The swirling storm around WikiLeaks today reinforces the need to defend the right of all media to reveal the truth.

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Julian Assange is the editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks.

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Wikileaks and the Worldwide Information War

Power, Propaganda, and the Global Political Awakening

by Andrew Gavin Marshall [article link](#)

December 6, 2010 | Global Research

Global Research [home page](#)

Support WikiLeaks and Defend Julian Assange

By Dave Lindorff [article link](#)

December 7, 2010 | OpEdNews

excerpt:

... It needs to be clearly understood by all Americans, and especially by anyone in the media who takes the profession seriously, that the attacks on WikiLeaks by the US government--attacks which have included heavy pressure on companies like Paypal, Amazon Books, Visa and Mastercard, all of which have closed their accounts with the organization, making it difficult if not impossible for Assange and his team to raise money, and on internet servers, making it harder for WikiLeaks to stay online--could as easily be used against news organizations and political organizations. If the government gets away with pressuring a server to close out an organization it doesn't like, it could as easily pressure a print shop not to publish a magazine, a news distributor not to distribute newspapers, or a power company not to provide juice to a broadcaster. If the government can pressure banks to close WikiLeaks' accounts, it could pressure banks to close a book publisher's account. And if the government can, as Attorney General says he is doing, tries to create a law with which to arrest and punish Assange, it can as easily trump up a "crime" and arrest a print publisher or radio network owner. These actions are not the actions of a democracy. They are the lawless actions of a dictatorship.

The darkness is rapidly closing in during this administration that once claimed to be about "hope and change."

Wikileaks: The Needed Modern Miracle On Main Street

By Douglas A. Wallace [article link](#)

December 6, 2010 | OpEdNews

Not since The Pentagon Papers were published in 1971 have the peoples of the world especially the United States been given a vision of the transparency of their governments as has been recently happening through the efforts of Julian Assange and his associates at [wikileaks.ch](#).

Like the Pentagon Papers, the publishing of so called secret or "classified" communications of the US government and its military demonstrate the total idiocy of government in its attempts to cover up its childish, unfit, immature inability to deal with international problems that stretch its false image of itself. Total incompetence!

The usual method of dealing with these inadequacies is to kill, discredit or destroy the messenger. It appears that Wikileaks has out-thought the powers that be and has set up a system of mirrors so that any number of websites can host Wikileaks and keep it from being shutdown.

As of last evening 208 websites were co-hosting Wikileaks with more being added by the minute. I urge thousands of website owners to get on the bandwagon.

TAKE NOTICE PRESIDENT OBAMA and the entire executive branch including the military that we the American People are fed up with the lies and cover up of your incompetent actions. It is time to stand down and pay attention to the will of the masses for whom you work!

No longer can you flip off the American people with lies and deception! It is time for full transparency and we demand it of you.

Any simple minded fool with the love of the American People could straighten up the mess you are mired in simply by positive acts of full disclosure. Government must correct itself. WE DEMAND IT OF YOU!

Mr. Assange, bring on the miracle! We the people ask it of you! And thank you for all you do!

Indecent Exposure: WikiLeaks Hounded for Showing Power Its True Face

By Chris Floyd [article link](#)

December 6, 2010 | OpEdNews

excerpt:

... One final observation: it is remarkable that the WikiLeaks release of diplomatic cables has provoked a far more virulent and draconian reaction from government officials -- and from their craven sycophants in the mainstream media -- than we ever saw after the earlier releases about Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet many of those Terror War releases provided detailed, eyewitness accounts of horrific acts of murder, brutality, and depraved indifference toward the slaughter of innocent people. It seems the American elite are more outraged at being caught in various diplomatic faux pas than being shown to be perpetrators and facilitators of murder, repression and state terror. That's because they know that their cowed and passive subjects -- continually stoked with the hatred and fear of foreign demons -- don't care how many darkies get killed on the other side of the world. And so the Terror War leaks occasioned no more than a few days of Beltway bluster.

But the new releases put a bit of a crimp in business as usual for our backroom operators, exposing some of the rank hypocrisy and all-pervasive corruption of our great and good -- and of their clients and partners around the world. All this might -- just might -- give the rabble unseemly notions ... such as the idea that their interests are perhaps not being served all that well by a system run by and for a handful of liars, tyrants, killers and thieves. We can't have that.

And so Julian Assange is now being hounded -- perhaps to his eventual death -- not for revealing war crimes and atrocities, but for showing us a glimpse of our leaders as they really are: stupid, vain, petty and savage.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [7:45 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Monday, December 6, 2010

Shamus Cooke: No Economic Recovery in Sight

No Economic Recovery in Sight:

Seven Reasons Why Global Capitalism Can't Recover Anytime Soon

by Shamus Cooke [article link](#)

December 6, 2010 | Global Research

As the recession grinds on, politicians in most industrial countries have an incentive to make exaggerated claims about the supposed coming economic recovery. Some say the recession is over. Obama is in the group that claims we're on "the road to recovery," while other nations can only spot recovery "on the horizon." Below are seven important social phenomena that point to a more realistic economic and political outlook.

1) Central Banks are Dumbfounded. The usual tricks that U.S. and European central banks use to avoid recessions are long-exhausted. Interest rates cannot get any lower. And because cheap money wasn't working, the printing press was turned up a notch, into what the U.S. federal reserve calls quantitative easing -- injecting hundreds of billions of dollars into the world economy, escalating an emerging trade war.

2) Trade War. For a global economy to grow, global cooperation is needed. But in a major recession all countries engage in a bitter struggle to dominate foreign markets so that their own corporations can export. These markets are won by devaluing currencies (accomplished in the U.S. by quantitative easing), installing protectionist measures (so that a nation's corporations have monopoly dominance over the nation's consumers), or by war (a risky but highly effective form of market domination).

3) Military War. Foreign war is a good symptom of economic decay. The domination of markets -- every inch of them -- become an issue of life and death importance. Wars have been unleashed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Pakistan. "Containing" economies like China and "opening" economies like Iran and North Korea become more urgent during a major recession, requiring brute force and creating further global instability in all realms of social life.

4) U.S. Economy at a Standstill. The most important consumer market in the world, the U.S. is a nation of nearly bankrupt consumers. Nearly thirty million Americans are unemployed or underemployed, while further job losses are certain, due to nearly every state's budget deficit. The New York Times explains:

"Now states are bracing for more painful cuts, more layoffs, more tax increases, more battles with public employee unions, more requests to bail out cities. And in the long term, as cities and states try to keep up on their debts, the very nature of government could change as they have less money left over to pay for the services they have long provided." (12-05-10)

5) Bailout Capitalism. First it was the banks and other corporations that needed bailing out, and now whole nations. Western nations bailed out their banks by falling into the massive debt that they are now drowning in. Greece and Ireland have been bailed out, with eyes shifting to Portugal, Spain, and Italy. The entire European Union is being called into question as the Euro takes a beating in the bailout spree. If the EU is dismantled, the shock waves will quickly reach other economies.

6) Bailout Repercussions. All western nations -- including the U.S. and England -- are grappling with their national debts. Rich bond investors are demanding that these countries drastically reduce their deficits, while also demanding that the deficits be reduced on the backs of working families, instead of rich investors. This is tearing the social fabric apart, as working and poor people see their social programs under attack. In Europe mass movements are erupting in France, Spain, Portugal, England, Greece, Ireland, Italy, etc. Social stability is a prerequisite for a recovered economy, but corporate politicians everywhere are asking much more than working people are willing to give.

7) The Far Right Emerges. To deal with working people more ruthlessly, the radical right is being unleashed. In normal times these bigots yell furiously but no one listens. But in times of economic crisis they're given endless airtime on all major media outlets. The message of the far right promotes all the rottenness not yet eradicated by education: racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, violence, and a backward nationalism that fears all things "foreign." These core beliefs effectively divide working people so that a concerted campaign against the corporate elite is harder to wage. Meanwhile, labor unions, progressives, and other working class organizations are instead targeted.

The above phenomena do not happen in a normal economic cycle of boom and bust. These symptoms point to a larger disease in the international economic system, a disease that cannot be cured by politicians who swear allegiance to this deteriorating system and to the wealthy elite who benefit from it. To ensure that the economic system is changed so that working people benefit, large-scale collective action is necessary, based on demands that unite the majority of working people: a massive job-creation program at the expense of Wall Street, no cuts to Social Security and Medicare, a moratorium on home foreclosures, passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, and so on. With the unions in the lead promoting these demands, working people could put up a real fight.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for [Workers Action](#). He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:00 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Paul Craig Roberts: Western Civilization Has Shed Its Values

Western Civilization Has Shed Its Values

By Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 5, 2010 | Global Research | OpEdNews | Signs of the Times

"The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth becomes the greatest enemy of the State." -- Dr. Joseph Goebbels

Western Civilization no longer upholds the values it proclaims, so what is the basis for its claim to virtue?

For example, the US print and TV media and the US government have made it completely clear that they have no regard for the First Amendment. Consider CNN's Wolf Blitzer's reaction to the leaked diplomatic cables that reveal how the US government uses deceptions, bribes, and threats to control other governments and to deceive the American and other publics. Blitzer is outraged that information revealing the US government's improprieties reached the people, or some of them. As Alexander Cockburn [wrote](#), Blitzer demanded that the US government take the necessary steps to make certain that journalists and the American people never again find out what their government is up to.

The disregard for the First Amendment is well established in the US media, which functions as a propaganda ministry for the government. Remember the NSA leak given to the New York Times that the George W. Bush regime was violating the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and spying on Americans without obtaining warrants from the FISA court? The New York Times spiked the story for one year and did not release it until after Bush's reelection. By then, the Bush regime had fabricated a legal doctrine that "authorized" Bush to violate US law.

Glenn Greenwald, writing in Salon, has exposed the absence of moral standards among WikiLeaks' critics. A number of American politicians have called for the US government to murder Julian Assange, as have journalists such as neoconservative propagandist Jonah Goldberg, who wrote: "Why wasn't Assange garroted in his hotel room years ago?"

WikiLeaks' critics could not make it clearer that they do not believe in accountable government. And to make certain that the government is not held accountable, WikiLeaks' critics are calling for every possible police state measure, including extra-judicial murder, to stamp out anyone who makes information available that enables the citizenry to hold government accountable.

The US government definitely does not believe in accountable government. Among the first things the Obama regime did was to make certain that there would be no investigation into the Bush regime's use of lies, fabricated "intelligence," and deception of the American public and the United Nations in order to further its agenda of conquering the independent Muslim states in the Middle East and turning them into US puppets. The Obama regime also made certain that no member of the Bush regime would be held accountable for violating US and international laws, for torturing detainees, for war crimes, for privacy violations or for any of the other criminal acts of the Bush regime.

As the cables leaked by a patriotic American to WikiLeaks reveal, the US government was even able to prevent accountable government in the UK by having British prime minister Brown "fix" the official Chilcot Inquiry into the deceptions used by former prime minister Tony Blair to lead the British into serving as mercenaries in America's wars. The US was able to do this, because the British prime minister does not believe in accountable government either.

The leaked documents show that the last thing the US government wants anywhere is a government that is accountable to its own citizens instead of to the US government.

The US government's frontal assault on freedom of information goes well beyond WikiLeaks and shutting down its host servers. In a December 2 editorial, "Wave goodbye to Internet freedom," the Washington Times reports that Federal Communications Commission chairman Julius Genachowski has "outlined a plan to expand the federal government's power over the Internet."

The obvious, but unasked, question is: Why does the US government fear the American people and believe that only news that is managed and spun by the government is fit to print? Is there an agenda afoot to turn citizens into subjects?

Perhaps the most discouraging development is the accusation that is being spread via the Internet that Julian Assange is a dupe or even a covert agent used by the CIA and Mossad to spread disinformation that furthers US and Israeli agendas. This accusation might come from intelligence services striving to protect governments by discrediting the leaked information. However, it has gained traction because some of the cables contain false information. Some have concluded, incorrectly, that the false information was put into the documents for the purpose of being leaked.

There is another explanation for the false information. Diplomats concerned with advancing their careers learn to tell their bosses what they want to hear, whether true or false. Diplomats understand that the US government has agendas that it cannot declare and that they are expected to support these agendas by sending in reports that validate the undeclared agendas. For example, the US government cannot openly say that it is endeavoring to create a climate of opinion that gives the US a green light for eliminating the independent Iranian government and re-establishing an American puppet state. US "diplomats," a.k.a., spies, understand this and fabricate the information that supports the agenda.

In my opinion, the most important of all the cables leaked is the [secret directive](#) sent by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to 33 US embassies and consulates ordering US diplomats to provide credit card numbers, email addresses, phone, fax and pager numbers, frequent-flyer account numbers and biographic and biometric information including DNA information on UN officials from the Secretary General down, including "heads of peace operations and political field missions."

The directive has been characterized as the spy directive, but this is an unusual kind of spying. Usually, spying focuses on what other governments think, how they are likely to vote on US initiatives, who can be bribed, and on sexual affairs that could be used to blackmail acquiescence to US agendas.

In contrast, the information requested in the secret directive is the kind of information that would be used to steal a person's identity.

Why does the US government want information that would enable it to steal the identities of UN officials and impersonate them?

The US government loves to pretend that its acts of naked aggression are acts of liberation mandated by "the world community." The world community has been less supportive of US aggression since it learned that the Bush regime lied about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, the UN has not given Washington the green light Washington wants for a military assault on Iran. Neither has the UN given Washington the extreme sanctions that it wants the world community to impose on Iran.

As the UN refused Washington's menu of sanctions, Washington unilaterally added its own sanction package to the UN sanctions, to the dismay of the Russians and other governments who believed that they had arrived at a compromise with Washington over the Iran sanctions issue.

Could it be that Washington wants to be able to impersonate UN officials and country delegates so that it can compromise them by involving them in fake terrorist plots, communications with terrorists real or contrived, money laundering, sex scandals and other such means of suborning their cooperation with Washington's agendas? All the CIA has to do is to call a Taliban or Hamas chief on a UN official's telephone number or send a compromising fax with a UN official's fax number or have operatives pay for visits to prostitutes with a UN official's credit card number.

The report in the Guardian on December 2 that the CIA drew up the UN spy directive signed off by Hillary Clinton is a good indication that the United States government intended to compromise the United Nations and turn the organization, as it has done with so many governments, into a compliant instrument of American policy.

Perhaps there is another plausible explanation of why the US government desired information that would enable it to impersonate UN officials, but as a person who had a 25-year career in Washington I cannot think of what it might be.

Paul Craig Roberts is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:47 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Chris Hedges: Happy as a Hangman

Happy as a Hangman

By Chris Hedges [article link](#)

December 6, 2010 | OpEdNews

Innocence, as defined by law, makes us complicit with the crimes of the state. To do nothing, to be judged by the state as an innocent, is to be guilty. It is to sanction, through passivity and obedience, the array of crimes carried out by the state.

To be innocent in America means we passively permit offshore penal colonies where we torture human beings, some of whom are children. To be innocent in America is to acquiesce to the relentless corporate destruction of the ecosystem that sustains the human species. To be innocent in America is to permit the continued theft of hundreds of billions of dollars from the state by Wall Street swindlers and speculators. To be innocent in America is to stand by as insurance and pharmaceutical companies, in the name of profit, condemn ill people, including children, to die. To be innocent in America is refusing to resist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that are not only illegal under international law but responsible for the murder of hundreds of thousands of people. This is the odd age we live in. Innocence is complicity.

The steady impoverishment and misery inflicted by the corporate state on the working class and increasingly the middle class has a terrible logic. It consolidates corporate centers of power. It weakens us morally and politically. The fraud and violence committed by the corporate state become secondary as we scramble to feed our families, find a job and pay our bills and mortgages. Those who cling to insecure, poorly paid jobs and who struggle with crippling credit card debt, those who are mired in long-term unemployment and who know that huge medical bills would bankrupt them, those who owe more on their houses than they are worth and who fear the future, become frightened and timid. They seek only to survive. They accept the pathetic scraps tossed to them by the corporate elite. The internal and external corporate abuse accelerates as we become every day more pliant.

Our corrupt legal system, perverting the concept that "all men are created equal," has radically redefined civic society. Citizens, regardless of their status or misfortune, are now treated with the same studied indifference by the state. They have been transformed from citizens to commodities whose worth is determined solely by the market and whose value is measured by their social and economic functions. The rich, therefore, are rewarded by the state with tax cuts because they are rich. It is their function to monopolize wealth and invest. The poor are supposed to be poor. The poor should not be a drain on the resources of the state or the oligarchic elite. Equality, in this new legal paradigm, means we are all treated alike, no matter what our circumstances. This new interpretation of equality, under which the poor are abandoned and the powerful are unchecked, has demolished the system of regulations, legal restraints and services that once protected the underclass from wealthy and corporate predators.

The creation of a permanent, insecure and frightened underclass is the most effective weapon to thwart rebellion and resistance as our economy worsens. Huge pools of unemployed and underemployed blunt labor organizing, since any job, no matter how menial, is zealously coveted. As state and federal social welfare programs, especially in education, are gutted, we create a wider and wider gulf between the resources available to the tiny elite and the deprivation and suffering visited on our permanent underclass. Access to education, for example, is now largely defined by class. The middle class, taking on huge debt, desperately flees to private institutions to make sure their children have a chance to enter the managerial ranks of the corporate elite. And this is the idea. Public education, which, when it functions, gives opportunities to all citizens, hinders a system of corporate neofeudalism. Corporations are advancing, with Barack Obama's assistance, charter schools and educational services that are stripped down and designed to train classes for their appropriate vocations, which, if you're poor means a future in the service sector. The eradication of teachers' unions, under way in states such as New Jersey, is a vital component in the dismantling of public education. Corporations know that good systems of public education are a hindrance to a rigid caste system. In corporate America everyone will be kept in his or her place.

The beating down of workers, exacerbated by the prospect that unemployment benefits will not be renewed for millions of Americans and that public sector unions will soon be broken, has transformed those in the working class from full members of society, able to participate in its debates, the economy and governance, into terrified people in fragmented pools preoccupied with the struggle of private existence. Those who are economically broken usually cease to be concerned with civic virtues. They will, history has demonstrated, serve any system, no matter how evil, and do anything for a salary, job security and the protection of their families.

There will be sectors of the society that, as the situation worsens, attempt to rebel. But the state can rely on a huge number of people who, for work and meager benefits, will transform themselves into willing executioners. The reconfiguration of American society into a corporate oligarchy is conditioning tens of millions not only to passively accept state and corporate crimes, but to actively participate in the mechanisms that ensure their own enslavement.

"Each time society, through unemployment, frustrates the small man in his normal functioning and normal self-respect," [Hannah Arendt](#) wrote in her 1945 essay "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," "it trains him for that last stage in which he will willingly undertake any function, even that of hangman."

Organs of state repression do not rely so much on fanatics and sadists as ordinary citizens who are desperate, who need a job, who are willing to obey. Arendt relates a story of a Jew who is released from Buchenwald. The freed Jew encountered, among the SS men who gave him certificates of release, a former schoolmate, whom he did not address but stared at. The SS guard spontaneously explained to his former friend: "You must understand, I have five years of unemployment behind me. They can do anything they want with me."

Arendt also quotes an interview with a camp official at [Majdanek](#). The camp official concedes that he has assisted in the gassing and burying of people alive. But when he is asked, "Do you know the Russians will hang you?" he bursts into tears. "Why should they? What have I done?" he says.

I can imagine, should the rule of law ever one day be applied to the insurance companies responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Americans denied medical care, that there will be the same confused response from insurance executives. What is frightening in collapsing societies is not only the killers, sadists, murderers and psychopaths who rise up out of the moral swamp to take power, but the huge numbers of ordinary people who become complicit in state crimes. I saw this during the war in El Salvador and the war in Bosnia. It is easy to understand a demented enemy. It is puzzling to understand a rational and normal one. True evil, as Goethe understood, is not always palpable. It is "to render invisible another human consciousness."

Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his book "The Gulag Archipelago" writes about a close friend who served with him in World War II. Solzhenitsyn's defiance of the Communist regime after the war saw him sent to the Soviet gulags. His friend, loyal to the state, was sent there as an interrogator. Solzhenitsyn was forced to articulate a painful truth. The mass of those who serve systems of terrible oppression and state crime are not evil. They are weak.

"If only there were vile people ... committing evil deeds, and if it were only necessary to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them," Solzhenitsyn wrote. "But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

The expansions of public and private organs of state security, from Homeland Security to the mercenary forces we are building in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the burgeoning internal intelligence organizations, exist because these "ordinary" citizens, many of whom are caring fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, have confused conformity to the state with innocence. Family values are used, especially by the Christian right, as the exclusive definition of public morality. Politicians, including President Obama, who betray the working class, wage doomed imperial wars, abandon families to home foreclosures and bank repossessions, and refuse to restore habeas corpus, are morally "good" because they are loyal husbands and fathers. Infidelity, instead of corporate murder, becomes in this absurd moral reasoning the highest and most unforgivable offense.

The bureaucrats who maintain these repressive state organs, who prosecute the illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or who maintain corporate structures that perpetuate human suffering, can define themselves as good--as innocent--as long as they are seen as traditional family men and women who are compliant to the laws of the state. And this redefinition of civic engagement permits us to suspend moral judgment and finally common sense. Do your job. Do not ask questions. Do not think. If these bureaucrats were challenged for the crimes they are complicit in committing, including the steady dismantling of the democratic state, they would react with the same disbelief as the camp guard at Majdanek.

Those who serve as functionaries within corporations such as Goldman Sachs or ExxonMobil and carry out crimes ask of their masters that they be exempted from personal responsibility for the acts they commit. They serve corporate structures that kill, but, as Arendt notes, the corporate employee "does not regard himself as a murderer because he has not done it out of inclination but in his professional capacity." At home the corporate man or woman is meek. He or she has no proclivity to violence, although the corporate systems they serve by day pollute, impoverish, maim and kill.

Those who do not carry out acts of rebellion, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, are guilty of solidifying and perpetuating these crimes. Those who do not act delude themselves into believing they are innocent. They are not.

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New York Times, as “...a brilliant, thoughtful, timely and unsettling book whose greatest merit is that it will rattle jingoists, pacifists, moralists, nihilists, politicians and professional soldiers equally.”

Hedges was part of the New York Times team that won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for the paper’s coverage of global terrorism and he received the 2002 Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism. He published his most recent book, [“Losing Moses on the Freeway: The 10 Commandments in America”](#) in June 2005.

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Sunday, December 5, 2010

[Randall Amster: It Goes Without Saying...](#)

It Goes Without Saying...

by Randall Amster [article link](#)

December 5, 2010 | CommonDreams

...that we take the greater portion of this world as we find it, not as we might like it to be. In this sense, we primarily play the roles of resigned participant or cynical observer where conscience exists, and where it does not the outcome is often manifested in terms of either willful neglect or conspicuous consumption. A relative though not insignificant few in every era will take up the thankless and unscripted task of confronting the status quo in an attempt to turn harsh realities into humane alternatives. Still, despite such efforts, it goes without saying that the impetus for positive change is seemingly outstripped by the rate of ongoing decay.

...that modern humans are the foremost species on the planet, and that the world's resources are largely viewed as little more than a human life-support system. Our dominant narratives and supporting scriptures confirm the rightful role of humankind as a prolific exploiter. Some will read into this a nascent urge to become enlightened stewards, whereas most will take the lines more literally as a mandate for lawful dominion, enacting an ever-expanding drama that seeks innovative ways to increase exploitation in the service of human progress. While the negative impacts of this ideology have been prophesied and even are beginning to take hold on a human (and not merely geological) time scale, it goes without saying that most are nonetheless committed to the scripted narrative in the implicit belief that it is just, virtuous, and predestined.

...that over time in an essentially finite world such a growth curve cannot be sustained. Laws of conservation and thermodynamics cannot be flouted indefinitely, and at a certain point in time the required human inputs will exceed the available resource outputs. The worst implications of this inevitable curve can be forestalled temporarily through deeper interventions and ingenious innovations, yet these often turn out to be net contributors to the problem since the growth-driven math simply does not add up. Despite our ostensible dominance, human existence is fragile in its utter dependence upon a range of irreplaceable and diminishing components that cannot be fabricated or otherwise conjured. Whereas the survival margin for humankind exists in a relatively narrow band of planetary variables concerning basics such as air, water, and sustenance, it goes without saying that for many there remains an unspoken faith that either technology or deity will bring us salvation in the end.

...that certain sectors profit immensely from this state of affairs, and thus have a strong interest in its perpetuation. For them, the issue is not so much about the fragile dependency of humankind on diminishing external inputs, but more so the matter of exerting control over those essentials. With such hardware dominance come the perquisites of power and the insulating blessings of privilege. In fact, the ravages of decay and diminution promise escalating crises for the balance of humankind that perversely delivers more hungry mouths and starving souls at the feet of those with exclusive control over the available inputs. While some lament this state of affairs and a few even openly contest it, it goes without saying that

most will go along with whatever contrived degradations and fomented antipathies are spun from the halls of power, in the unsurprising realization that fear and neediness foster complicity.

...that this interweaving of a deep-seated dominance narrative, an inescapably inexorable rate of depletion, and a perpetual state of capitalized crises threatens to create an uninhabitable world for all concerned, including those who have anointed themselves our masters. While the implications of climatic destabilization and energy entropy will be felt everywhere, the burdens will be unequally distributed, inuring to the increasing immiseration of the already disadvantaged. Attempts will be made to deploy high technology to ameliorate the ravages of the growth/depletion cycle, admitting greater consolidation of power vested in those who regulate the planet's thermostat and allocate its productive capacities. Life-and-death austerity measures will be emplaced in the name of human survival, with the measure-makers self-exempted based on inherited legacy and cultivated necessity. It goes without saying that some will decry this system of expanding authority, yet it is also the case that most will abide its mandates through equal parts mild incentivization and extreme deprivation.

...that this centralization of survival will embody an odious and brutal scenario, yet it represents a mere extrapolation of the world in which we find ourselves today. The course has already been set, and the seeds sown for a near future of ostensible "controlled cataclysm," portending a polarized world in which the bifurcation of consumption and production, of privilege and privation, of rapacity and incapacitation, skews along the demarcating lines of surface pigmentation and national supremacy. The interposition of caste and class will be reinforced through ideological acculturation and naked force alike, much as already exists in our midst during this period of apparent trial run. The template is by now coming into sharp focus, with only the variables inherent in nonlinear systems standing at potential cross purposes to the master plan. While for some the inevitability and rightfulness of control goes without saying, others will embrace the vicissitudes of chaos as preferable to the auspices of authority.

...that the future is not yet written, even as its literal roots are evident in the present. The window of opportunity is before us now, but it is precipitously closing with each succeeding cycle of deepening calamity and expanding control. As against this, a new narrative - one that is also grounded in a much older set of tenets - is struggling to gain a foothold despite disincentivization, condemnation, and persecution of its adherents. It is one that strives to reconnect the human timeline to its eternal antecedents of organic existence and imbued experience. The aberration of industrial exploitation and its concomitant indices of power and authority will be restored to their prior place as a disfavored view due to an inherent illogic that sacrifices long-term continuation at the altar of short-term consumption. Still, the lessons learned during this evolutionary dead-end period will serve to inform the reconstituted arc of sane human engagement with the world, and the restoration of tools and norms vis-à-vis technologies and laws will reflect the wisdom gained in the common struggle of apocalypse averted. It goes without saying that such a vision requires great optimism even in the face of grave doubt.

...that in order to extract opportunity from crisis and capacity from catastrophe, we will be asked to sacrifice much and work tirelessly in myriad ways. Embracing the notion that we will get our living right after some calamitous and/or fortuitous event unfolds in a speculative future is to court the very real danger of our extinction. The urgency of the task is compounded by the active undermining of the concrete alternatives at hand. And yet, despite the obvious impetus toward cognitive compliance, a gathering movement is unfolding around the world that is struggling both materially and ideologically to achieve a critical mass of constructive energies. While it goes without saying that this nascent movement is largely unnoticed in the mainstream consciousness, it nevertheless continues to unfurl.

...that it is incumbent upon us to seize this narrow window of opportunity and action by articulating that which largely goes unsaid. It is apparent that the time has long passed in which we can afford simply to continue on the present path toward a self-imposed oblivion to which we blithely accede. In the end, it thus goes without saying that we cannot merely go along without firmly saying that something is wrong.

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Saturday, December 4, 2010

[Stephen Lendman: Sanction Congress, Not One Member](#)

Sanction Congress, Not One Member

By Stephen Lendman [article link](#) [article link](#)

December 04, 2010 | Stephen Lendman | Countercurrents

The Constitution's Article I, Section 5, clause 2 authorizes the House of Representatives to discipline or "punish" its members for "disorderly Behavior," as well as for criminal, civil liability, or other misconduct issues. Ostensibly it's to protect the institutional integrity and reputation of the body, an impossible challenge given its longstanding record, notably over the past three decades, deserving far more than censure.

Punishment may be by reprimand, censure, expulsion, and/or fines, monetary restitution, loss of seniority, and suspension or loss of certain privileges. In addition, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct may issue a formal Committee reproach by "Letter of Reproval" for misconduct not warranting full House action. It may also express disapproval by informal letters and/or direct communications with members.

In US history, five members were expelled, three during the Civil War for disloyalty to the Union. Others, however, resigned ahead of formal House action. More recently, on October 2, 1980, Rep. Michael J. Myers was removed after being convicted of bribery for political favors in the so-called ABSCAM FBI sting operation. On July 24, 2002, Rep. James Traficant, Jr. was also expelled after his 10-count conviction on charges of accepting favors, gifts and money in return for performing official beneficial acts for donors.

Unlike "expel," the term "censure" doesn't appear in the Constitution, although it's also authorized under Article I, Section 5, clause 2 power to "punish...Members for disorderly Behavior." Most actions occurred in the 19th century, usually over issues of decorum, including insulting other members on the floor, committing violent acts against them, supporting recognition of the Confederacy, selling military academy appointments, or more recently for financial misconduct or sexual misbehavior with House pages.

On July 11, 1832, Rep. William Stanberry was the first member censured for insulting the House Speaker. Prior to December 2, 2010, Reps. Daniel Crane and Gerry Studds were both censured on July 20, 1983 for sexual misconduct with House pages.

Charles Bernard Rangel, Democrat Representative for New York's 15th Congressional District

On December 2, the House voted 333 - 79 to censure Rangel (a 20-term member since January 1971) for ethics violations, its harshest penalty short of expulsion.

He becomes the 23rd House member so disciplined. In his case, it's for 11 of 13 charges, including improperly soliciting millions of dollars from corporate officials and lobbyists, failing to disclose hundreds of thousands of dollars of income and assets on financial disclosure forms, maintaining a rent-subsidized luxury Harlem apartment for his campaign committee, and failing to pay income taxes on a Dominican Republic villa.

In one of several December 2 New York Times articles, David Kocieniewski headlined, "As Rangel Stands Silently, Censure Vote Rings Loudly," saying:

"...his gaze steady (and) hands clasped before him, (Rangel) stood silently in the well of the House of Representatives....as Speaker Nancy Pelosi somberly read a resolution censuring him for bringing discredit to the House," and "violat(ing) the public trust."

Imagine the brazen hypocrisy by a tainted Speaker and body. More on that below.

A December 2 Times editorial headlined, "The House Rebukes Mr. Rangel," calling "the mood on the House floor....appropriately grim." Adding also that "Taxpayers disgusted by Mr. Rangel's actions and Congress' go-along-get-along attitude must demand more...."

Indeed so, but not what The Times suggests. More on that as well.

Major Unaddressed Issues

Besides their own compromised ethics, notably their ties to big money donors, both Congress and administration officials are guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors, ones far greater than Rangel's self-enrichment.

The list is long and disturbing, affecting all 535 members and every key administration official - serious crimes deserving indictments, prosecutions, and for most, imprisonment, not slaps on the wrist, reprimands, censure, expulsion, or for a president and vice president, impeachment, conviction, and removal.

Unsurprisingly, the extensive Times coverage said nothing, nor ever earlier about high government crimes and misdemeanors, the "newspaper of record" effectively endorsing them. That's its role serving power and privilege, relenting only in rare instances, this time on Rangel, perhaps reluctantly. Never for the most serious criminality, examples below.

They include:

- (1) Crimes of war and against humanity. All congressional members supporting the bogus war on terror and illegal Iraq and Afghan wars, including funding, are guilty, as are high, middle, and lower level administration officials, including the president and vice president.
- (2) Looting the Treasury for Wall Street and corporate favorites.
- (3) Bailing out criminal banks instead of nationalizing or closing them, and prosecuting their top officials for fraud and grand theft.
- (4) Consigning millions of Americans to impoverishment without jobs, homes, savings, social services, or futures.
- (5) Letting hunger, homelessness, and poverty fester while plundering the nation's resources illegally.
- (6) Funding Israel's war machine, its crimes and overall lawlessness.
- (7) Illegally supporting regime change in independent countries, including Venezuela, Iran, Honduras, Haiti, Ecuador, North Korea, and elsewhere.
- (8) Prohibiting independent political parties from challenging a two-party dictatorship, supporting privilege, not popular interests.
- (9) Endorsing pre-scripted, big money-funded fake elections, not a free, fair and open process.
- (10) Allowing the world's largest homeland gulag to grow, persist, and commit grotesque crimes against inmates, many unjustly convicted.

- (11) Passing police state laws, turning democracy into tyranny.
- (12) Endorsing torture as official policy.
- (13) Permitting the criminalization of activists, challenging state policy against imperial wars, homeland repression, and favoritism for wealth over vital popular needs.
- (14) Endorsing a corrupted judicial system, including stacking the federal bench with right-wing ideologues.
- (15) Passing wealth and power-friendly legislation, harming millions, including the middle class, targeted for destruction.
- (16) Vilifying Muslims for their faith, ethnicity, prominence, activism, and charity.
- (17) Targeting human rights attorneys and other lawyers who defend unpopular clients too vigorously.
- (18) Calling patriotic whistleblowers traitors.
- (19) Attacking a free and open Internet.
- (20) Denying immigrants of color fair and just treatment.
- (21) Supporting privatization of essential services, including healthcare and education.
- (22) Working covertly to end Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other vital social services.

Much more as well by officials corrupting the notion of government of, by and for the people. Repeatedly, they've betrayed the public trust by acting illegally, immorally, and/or destructively, including Rangel for his voting record, and (until replaced on March 3 over ethics charges), as Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

It has jurisdiction over tax policy, tariffs, other revenue-raising measures, and vital programs, including Social Security, Medicare, unemployment benefits, federal welfare, enforcement of child support laws, and foster care and adoption programs. Its chairman holds immense power for good or ill. None in recent memory, including Rangel, served honorably, a "crime" omitted from his charges, as well as his 40-year voting record, supporting power, privilege, imperial wars, and corporate interests like most members of Congress.

All should be held accountable for issues far graver than self-enrichment. They affect everyone but the super-rich and rich, including betrayed constituents deserving better from elected officials but never getting it from either party - a real crime demanding much greater punishment than wrist-slaps, reprimands, fines, loss of privileges, or sanctions.

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How the Oligarchs Took America

by Andy Kroll [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Charles Noble: Why Capitalism Needs the Left

Why Capitalism Needs the Left

by Charles Noble [article link](#)

Logos: Noble, Charles: "Why Capitalism Needs the Left," Issue 2.4 (Fall 2003)

Capitalism is a marvelous thing, a wondrous machine that has carried human societies to previously unimagined wealth. No other economic system, no matter how lofty its ambitions, has come close. Capitalism has done what clerics and moral philosophers once thought impossible: turned our self-interest, even our greed, into the motor of social progress.

Free markets, in turn, have made it possible to conduct globe spanning commercial transactions in ways that maximize economic efficiency and minimize the need for central direction. The market system has allowed society to conduct its business and organize its affairs, including the production and distribution of vital goods and services, without resort to the commands of central planners. Instead, complex enterprises are coordinated through a decentralized process of mutual accommodation and communication, assuring that scarce resources go to their best uses.

In combination, free market and capitalism have also helped usher in and sustain fundamental political changes, widening the scope both of personal freedom and political democracy. Because of this system, more people get to choose where to work, what to consume, and what to make than ever before, while ancient inequalities of rank and status are overturned. The spread of market capitalism has also laid the foundation for the expansion of democratic decision-making. With the establishment of private property and free exchange, political movements demanding other freedoms, including wider access to government, have proliferated. To be sure, capitalism cannot guarantee personal liberty or political democracy. It has produced its share of dictatorships too. But, to date, no society has been able to establish and maintain political democracy without first establishing and securing a market capitalist system.

The large corporations that stand at the heart of contemporary capitalism have proven indispensable in this transformation. They are the essential intermediaries in the modern economy, linking financial capital, expertise, technology, managerial skill, labor and leadership. They are spreading everywhere in the world not only because they are powerful, but also because they work. But market capitalism is not a machine that can run on its own. It needs rules, limits, and above all else stewardship. Partly because the system feeds off of people's darker instincts, partly because it is a machine, and therefore indifferent to human values, and partly because there is no central planner to assure that everything works out in the end, there must be some conscious effort to bring order to this chaos, however creative it might be. Left to its own devices, unfettered capitalism produces great inequities, great suffering, and great instability. In fact, these in-built tendencies are enough to destroy the system itself. Karl Marx figured this out in the mid-19th century and built his revolutionary system on the expectation that these dark forces would prevail. But Marx underestimated our ability to use politics to impose limits on the economic system itself.

At one time, and still in other places, even conservatives knew this to be true, and offered themselves up as responsible social stewards. Whether out of a sense of noblesse oblige or enlightened self interest, they volunteered to lead a collective effort to reform the system so that capitalism could survive and continue to serve human interests. From the 1930s through the 1970s, American corporate leaders and a fair number of Republicans seemed to understand this too. They made their piece with "big" government, seeing in the New Deal and even the Great Society a way to forge both social peace and political stability through the creation of a "mixed" economy.

Sadly, this sort of conservatism has all but completely disappeared from the American scene. The contemporary right has abandoned whatever commitment it once had to making capitalism work for everyone, at least if that involves any sort of political intervention. Conservatives find it very hard to even think these thoughts. Instead, they mechanically repeat Lockian and Smithian nostrums about limited government that even these avatars of private property and free markets would have disavowed - if only because the slavish adherence to them makes it impossible to sustain political order and social cohesion, let alone a competitive economy.

According to the American right, capitalism's problems have nothing to do with capitalism itself but are rooted in the government's misguided effort to reform it. Corporate excesses have nothing to do with corporate power, but only to the predatory behavior of a few CEO's gone bad. Blinded by these fixed ideas, conservatives now threaten many of the things that most Americans hold dear. Laissez-faire, the conservative's default position on almost every vital policy issue today, puts individuals and communities at serious risk. This bears repeating. In many of the most important matters, from the quality of the air we breathe, to the safety of our pension funds, we "leave it to the market" at our peril.

Progressives also need to make something else clear: society benefits when the left governs. This will seem counter-intuitive, even bizarre, to a generation brought up on the idea that liberals are always soft-headed, bleeding hearts, radicals are wannabe Stalinists, and conservatives are, in former Republican Majority Leader Dick Armey's words, the real "deep thinkers." ¹ But the record is clear here too. To the extent that capitalism has served the interests of the vast majority of Americans, and not just a few rich investors and corporate executives, the left deserves the credit. History shows that capitalism has been made to meet human needs because progressives have challenged many of the basic principles upon which the system is premised, including the idea that private property rights are sacred, free markets are always efficient and fair, and corporations inevitably serve the public interest.

This point also bears repeating. In the 20th century, it's been the left that has fought for racial justice, worker rights, equal opportunity, women's liberation, environmental justice, consumer protection, civil liberties, and anti-discrimination laws - the whole panoply of social and political changes that have made America a better society. Truth be told, if laissez-faire conservatives had had their way, we would still be living in the Gilded Age.

This doesn't mean that more government is always the better choice. But on the large social and economic issues that bedevil society, within certain limits the more powerful the left, the better off people are. This is why the recent and precipitous decline of progressive politics is such a disaster for so many Americans. And why it's so important that progressives figure out how to make this clear.

The Limits of the Free Market

Capitalism needs government because free markets don't do everything well. It's really that simple. The political economists who helped invent the system knew this. Adam Smith fully expected, even hoped, that government would act when necessary not only to provide for national defense, but for the establishment of justice and the provision of public works. Without these public activities, the system simply wouldn't function. John Stuart Mill, who thought laissez-faire a useful "general rule," also wrote "there is scarcely anything really important to the general interest, which it may not be desirable, or even necessary, that the government should take upon itself." ²

Unfortunately, conservatives who celebrate these theorists cannot or will not listen to what they actually had to say about the limits of the market system or consider several hundred years of evidence on that point. In the face of overwhelming proof that markets don't provide everything we need, conservative economists, including Nobel Prize winners like Milton Friedman, would have us believe that if government only got out of the way, competition would be perfect and market outcomes fair, and that capitalism would grow smoothly and robustly. If their denial of reality were only of interest to academics, we could dismiss it and move on. But because the Republican Party is intent on putting these benighted ideas, however poorly thought out, into practice, they can't be ignored.

We could proceed by pointing out that when their own economic interests are at stake, few conservatives are actually willing to live by the principles they espouse. The very same corporate executives who decry government regulations, federal welfare programs, and excessive public spending line up for more than \$150 billion a year in corporate subsidy programs and targeted tax loopholes that enhance their bottom line. Whether what's on offer are loan guarantees from the Export-Import bank, or grants from the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Commerce, Fortune 500 companies like Halliburton, Mobil Oil, General Electric, AT&T, FedEx, and General Motors show up hat in hand. ³ In some cases, the amount of money involved is truly staggering. In the 1990s, agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland, a friend to both political parties, received more than \$3 billion in subsidies to produce ethanol, despite any real indication that this gasoline substitute helps the environment, improves energy efficiency, or benefits anyone other than corn farmers and ADM itself.

All the while, Dwayne Andreas, ADM's chairman, brazenly denounced government spending, decried the disappearance of free markets in America, and called for tax increases on working Americans to close the federal deficit.⁴

Andreas is not alone. Corporations that can't cut it in the market routinely line up at the public trough for handouts. Chrysler did it in the early 1980s, taking a \$1.5 billion loan guarantee from the federal government; the savings and loans did it in 1989, taking a \$157 billion bailout from Congress; and the airlines did it in 2003, taking a \$15 billion free lunch. But even successful firms feel no shame in accepting government handouts. As the high-tech economy boomed in the 1990s, bestowing billions on top managers and shareholders, high-tech executives waxed eloquent at corporate galas about the benefits of laissez-faire. All the while, the Department of Commerce's Advanced Technology Program handed these very same corporations hundreds of millions of dollars a year to subsidize the development and marketing of new products.⁵ One study concluded that in 1996 U.S. corporations received more in direct subsidies and tax breaks than all the American poor received from the government's safety net programs, including Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), student aid, housing subsidies, food and nutrition assistance, and other kinds of direct public assistance. ⁶

Congressional cheerleaders for laissez-faire are notorious hypocrites too, pulling out all the stops to get government contracts for their districts even as they denounce that same government for catering to special interests. Newt Gingrich, a famous critic of big government and pork-barrel politics, made sure when in power that his constituents were prime recipients of federal largesse, ranging from a \$100,000 federal grant to the University of Georgia for research on Vidalia onions (a local crop) to a billion-plus contract to Lockheed Martin to build new military aircraft in Marietta, the Speaker's home town. ⁷

But while exposing hypocrisy can be fun, it doesn't speak directly to the underling issues. After all, libertarians have their own fantastic solution to that problem: they would make it impossible for anyone to benefit from public spending and government regulation. So the question remains: Can we really rely on free markets to achieve our values?

Academic economists and policy analysts have covered much of this ground elsewhere and at length. But because market worship has returned, and the critics of laissez-faire have so effectively been banned from the airwaves, it's worth repeating their most telling complaints. To begin with, as Locke, Smith, and Mill understood, only government can establish the basic rules of social, political, and economic life, including the rights to both liberty and private property that conservatives rightly insist upon. Unless these rights exist in law, and have the backing of a government sufficiently powerful to enforce them, the law of the jungle would prevail. Russia's recent experience privatizing and deregulating its economy without first establishing these basic rules, illustrates just how difficult life can be when government is not strong enough to impose basic standards of conduct. Gangsterism prevails.

Government is also needed to regulate basic commercial transactions, including the supply of money and credit, upon which all other business activity depends. And only government can establish and enforce limits on what can and can't be sold in the market. It took laws, not just good intentions and moral exhortation, to stop slavery and indentured servitude in the U.S. It will take laws, strongly enforced, to end the trafficking in women and the sale of dangerous narcotics to children. Without these rules, and the sanctions to back them up, these would remain viable business enterprises.

Markets fail in other ways. Some things (economists call them "pure public goods") will not be produced in sufficient quantity or quality, despite their importance to the market system as a whole. The underlying theory of pure public goods is a bit technical, but the idea is not: these are things that benefit everyone (whether or not they pay for them), and that are far too expensive for any single individual to purchase on his or her own. As a result, if we are to have it, we must do it "collectively." Lighthouses used to be a favorite example; defense is one contemporary one. Unless we use the government to decide how much defense we want, and then make people pay for it with taxes, we will not have enough. The hard truth is that people would "free ride," letting others pay the costs while hoping to enjoy the benefits. As a result, defense would be undersupplied. Even the richest among us could not fill this gap alone.

Markets also have some pretty nasty side effects. Technically, these are called "by-products" or "externalities". Put simply, there are some goods whose production or exchange has consequences for people who are not directly involved in the transaction. While these consequences can be positive, the negative ones are more consequential. Air and water pollution are famous examples. Consider the production of steel. The steel producer pumps the by-products of the manufacturing

process into the surrounding air and water, polluting the environment of the factory's unwitting neighbors. They pay the price; the steel producer sees only the profits from not cleaning up. Absent government regulation, the seller (and whoever has bought his or her product) neither changes his or her behavior nor compensates the victims.

Markets also have a tendency to under produce certain things, most significantly the "social" or "public" investments that are critical to the long-term health of the economy and society. Essential infrastructure investments, including roads, bridges, tunnels, airports, and harbors, might be organized privately, but the record suggests that, for similar reasons, this is not likely to happen. These will be under produced because they do not yield returns in a timely fashion, or in a way that can be easily captured by potential investors, who are typically rather shortsighted and want to see profits relatively quickly. The stock market reinforces this tendency, because shareholders can easily dump stocks that don't meet quarterly profit expectations and move on to the next big thing. In the end, only the public sector, with its power to tax and spend, is prepared to step up and make the necessary commitment.

Take the biomedical revolution that is transforming medicine and paying huge dividends too. Biomedical research got off the ground in the 1960s not because private investors dumped millions into it, but because government agencies underwrote the research and development costs, believing that biomed would prove important down the road. Indeed, many of the most important advances in drug therapy have resulted not from research and development spending by the pharmaceutical industry, but from government labs. While the big drug companies do spend tens of billions of dollars every year hunting for new drugs, much of that is spent developing treatments for baldness, obesity, and impotence; the publicly funded National Institutes of Health do the medically important science. A recent National Bureau of Economic Research study indicates that fifteen of the twenty-one drugs with the highest therapeutic value developed between 1965 and 1992 resulted from research done with public money. The National Cancer Institute spent \$35 million to develop paclitaxel (Taxol), used to treat breast, lung, and ovarian cancers, before handing it over to Bristol-Myers Squibb, which now sells the drug for twenty times what it costs to make. Working with Duke University researchers, the NCI spent taxpayer money to develop AZT, the anti-AIDS drug, which is now a cash cow for Glaxo Wellcome.⁸

Because the market wouldn't do it, the research that led to the creation of the Internet also began as a government funded project. Whether or not Al Gore invented the Internet, it's clear that Microsoft and Sun Microsystems did not. American computer scientist Vinton Cerf, working on a government project, developed the first internet and transmission control protocols (the infamous TCP setting), which were used to link computer networks at several American universities and research laboratories. An English computer scientist, funded by the European Organization for Nuclear Research - founded by a consortium of European governments - developed the World Wide Web.

In fact, the educational system that made both of these innovations possible is itself a product of long-term, public investment. After all, how many people are prepared to front \$100,000 or more to assure a single child's education? Today we call these things "human capital." But whatever it's called, the point is the same: private investors are not fond of investments that are both uncertain and pay off far in the future. If we waited for them to act, only the children of the those could afford it would get a decent education.

Even when markets do produce enough things, they rarely distribute them in an equitable fashion. Rather, demand governs distribution and demand is a function of both desire and purchasing power. As a result, the distribution of valued things is likely to mirror the distribution of income and wealth. As long as people's economic resources vary, so will their ability to purchase what they want and need. It's hard to get worked up over every one of these inequalities. Few political philosophers would spill much ink arguing for the equal distribution of plasma screen televisions or Armani leather jackets. But the unequal distribution of other goods and services, such as health care, education, and personal safety, is hard to ignore. These are primary goods, things that shape how people live their lives, the choices that they have, and even their life spans. Unless one assumes that the ability to purchase something is the only ethical consideration that should be taken seriously, it's hard not to conclude that markets cannot be left alone to decide these issues.

Government also turns out to be the only actor capable of intervening effectively when the overall economy fails to perform. Regardless of the reigning economic orthodoxy, no one is prepared or willing, least of all bankers and industrialists, to let capitalism "take its natural course," if that means high unemployment, or runaway inflation, or declining profits. When recession looms, or supply bottlenecks emerge, most people, including corporate executives and

stockholders, turn to government for solutions. And rightly so. Firms, trade associations, even the most powerful CEO's, cannot mobilize the resources necessary to overcome systemic and structural problems. Only the government, precisely because it is such a powerful economic actor - the single largest purchaser of goods and services, including military hardware, transportation, health care, and education - has the wherewithal to respond.

Finally, having free markets in everything would impose an enormous decision making burden on people who might be far better off spending their time thinking about other questions. Like it or not, people are not always prepared to make the decisions that markets force on them. Many involve technical questions, requiring a fair amount of information and expertise. The choice of phone provider can be enormously complicated, let alone the decision to opt for one or another health insurance plan. In these sorts of cases, peoples' decisions, and therefore market outcomes, are likely to be based as much on accident, ignorance, or a company's good luck to have signed up the next NBA superstar to spearhead its advertising campaign, as they are on rational choice. Consumer education helps people a bit. But high quality, reliable information is hard to find amid the clutter of advertising and manipulation, and few people have the time to process it.

Free market advocates say that this criticism is inherently paternalistic because it implies that people are not prepared to decide important issues for themselves. But that's a false issue. No one on the right or the left suggests that everyone should decide every important question that might affect him or her. Clearly, in matters of fundamental import, where people's lives are affected in vital ways, we want to err on the side of self-determination. But we can and should opt to let others decide questions in areas where the requirements of technical expertise are high and the costs of delegation low. We ask government to inspect restaurant kitchens because we're not prepared or particularly eager to do it ourselves. We don't think we lose much autonomy or liberty by delegating this power to public agents. At the same time, the market alternative - waiting to see if anyone dies at our local eatery - is simply untenable. The same sort of calculation could be applied in a host of other areas, reducing both the scope of market transactions and the information costs associated with making them.

Beware the Corporation

Corporations cause all sorts of harm too, unless they are closely supervised. Subject to elaborate personnel, management and surveillance systems designed to control their behavior and maximize their productivity, workers in large companies feel the impact on a daily basis. They spend half or more of their waking hours governed by a system of private governance that would have been the envy of medieval princes.

One in four large employers admit to surreptitious spying on their employees with one or another form of electronic surveillance. Nearly three quarters of large companies subject employees to random urine tests. Employers eaves drop on employee conversations, read workers' email, and pin "active badges" on them so that they can electronically monitor their movements at the workplace. 9 Jobs tasks are broken down into the smallest possible, easily repeatable, readily monitored unit to assure maximum productivity.

All the while, workers remain vulnerable to the profit-maximizing strategies and even financial chicanery of top management. Victimized by downsizing or fraudulent accounting schemes designed to increase stock prices and executive compensation, all but the most indispensable employees have little recourse. In some traditional industries, like meatpacking and food processing, the work is simultaneously low paid, hazardous, and insecure. But even "new economy" companies abuse their workers, treating all but the most valuable as interchangeable commodities. The determined effort by high tech companies like Microsoft to hire part-time, contingent labor rather than full-time workers, and the technology sector's infamous and largely successful resistance to unions, threatens to turn millions of white collar employees into a 21st century proletariat.

Recent revelations about corporate criminality in the energy and telecommunications industries, while admittedly spectacular, illustrate just how much harm companies can do to their workers' financial well being. Enron fired 4,200 workers; WorldCom let 17,000 go. 10 No doubt, many of these employees have already found other jobs. But what about their savings and pension funds, and the workers whose savings and pension funds were invested in these companies? Thanks to Enron's and WorldCom's creative accounting, public employee pension funds lost at least \$1.5 billion in the Enron debacle alone. 11 AFL-CIO pension funds lost \$3.3 billion in the two bankruptcies combined. 12 Keep in mind the reality behind the figures. While a few executives may spend a bit of time in prison, and be forced to sell a house or two, as

the Lays complained after the Enron collapse. For the next several decades, millions of people will be retiring on less, often substantially less, than they had planned, or working far into their senior years to close the gap.

The impact of corporate behavior on the communities that shelter them can also be devastating. Business boosters rightly stress the positive income and employment affects of corporate investment; these can be quite significant. But there are often considerable costs. Increasingly, companies demand all sorts of financial incentives (including lower taxes, less stringent environmental regulations, and substantial subsidies) from state and local governments before they will commit to a particular locale. But even these commitments can prove ephemeral because most corporations are prepared to fly when they see a better opportunity. To no avail, Michigan gave General Motors \$13.5 million in tax abatements to maintain its Ypsilanti assembly plant in the 1980s. A decade later, the company closed the plant and shipped the jobs to Arlington, Texas, citing lower costs and greater productivity. Michigan was left with a gaping hole in its tax base and little else. Decisions such as these are doubly devastating because the local community first gives up potential tax revenues and then loses the jobs and incomes it sought to secure with those costly concessions.

Recently, corporate flight has been taken to extremes, with American companies shifting their titular headquarters to offshore tax havens to avoid any financial obligations in the U.S. - despite maintaining domestic production and distribution facilities. Though much publicized, the 2002 effort of Stanley Works, a billion dollar tool and hardware manufacturer incorporated in Connecticut since 1852, to reincorporate in Bermuda was entirely unexceptional. Stanley Works backed off after intense public scrutiny, but more than a dozen U.S. companies, including ones like Ingersoll-Rand, which earn millions from U.S. government contracts, remain incorporated in foreign tax havens, avoiding U.S. taxes. In 2003, Democratic efforts to force these American companies to pay their fair share of American taxes were killed by the same hyperpatriotic House Republicans that made their cafeteria serve "freedom" fries so that they could avoid having to even say the word "French."

Government could do more to control corporate power, but it's fighting an uphill battle. Old-style corruption plays a part in bending politicians to the will of the firm. Despite seemingly endless efforts to regulate them, campaign contributions remain a powerful source of political influence at all levels of government, enabling the financially well endowed to buy private access to decision makers. But corporate political power also derives from what Charles Lindblom has called business's "privileged position." By this, Lindblom means the great deference we as a society pay to corporations, their top managers, and their big stockholders owing to the vital role these firms play in the U.S. economy. We have little choice in the matter, Lindblom says, because we are so dependent on them to create jobs and pay wages and salaries. Unless government plays a more active and directive role in stimulating and even organizing economic activity, Americans will have to continue to pay attention to the interests and preferences of these behemoths, even as they seduce and abandon us.¹³

In fact, the U.S. government tends to treat the CEO's of the Fortune 500 as it treats other political leaders, as coequals, seeking their counsel, listening to their opinions, and respecting their turf. And because we defer to them, we tend not to ask hard questions about whether or not corporations really live up to the promises made by and for them. Apart from the occasional, egregious scandal, we simply do not pay close attention to the manifold ways in which corporations disrupt and injure individuals and communities.

Finally, corporate power has helped create what can only be called a corporate culture, which steadily debases public discourse by translating all questions of value into economic terms, encouraging Americans to equate consumer satisfaction with the public interest. However pleasurable this might seem in the moment, the impact on political life has been devastating, as people withdraw from public activities that are vital to democratic citizenship - walking the mall rather than their precincts, window shopping rather than knocking on neighbor's doors.

But everything we know about the nature of democracy suggests that it cannot survive without a lively, open, public discourse in which people confront each other's opinions in the course of talking about how to organize the things they have in common. Yet corporate America is replacing public debate with a massive and continuous campaign to manipulate consumer demand; to sell people things they didn't know they wanted, let alone needed; and to convince Americans that personal satisfaction can only be achieved by buying things. Indeed, the very idea that people have other interests and that

they could live other kinds of lives is obscured by the relentless effort to market everything, whether over the nation's airwaves, in its public spaces, or on the Internet.

Corporate apologists respond in all sorts of ways to these criticisms. The firm, they say, is only a passive conduit, satisfying people's wants within the limits imposed by consumer demand and the costs of production and distribution. Or, as Murray Weidenbaum, chair of the Council of Economic Advisors during Ronald Reagan's first term, has put it, corporations "serve the unappreciated and involuntary role of proxy for the overall consumer interest. 14 Market competition, surveillance by boards of directors, the need to raise investment capital, the judgments of large and small investors - these forces keep managers in check. Supporters also remind us that corporations bestow enormous benefits on society, including a cornucopia of previously unimagined delights. If companies make employees toe the line, they also offer them quite a bit in return, paying people well for the time spent at work. In fact, corporate life is far less coercive or all encompassing than its critics imagine. Because corporations, unlike governments, cannot command our obedience, people have choices. They can opt out of the corporate world; they don't have to work for the Gap or IBM; or buy name-brand jeans; or worry about the kind of car they drive. Workers can change jobs. Investors can sell their stock in one company and invest in another, or buy bonds, or invest in "socially responsible" mutual funds. People can live in communes, or monasteries, or in the backwoods of Wyoming. There is, in other words, choice.

But these rebuttals do not stand up to close scrutiny. The modern corporation is not a direct descendant of Smith's capitalist entrepreneur. It is not only different in size but in power and motivation. Rather, the modern corporation is more like a mini-state (sometimes not so mini) than a mom-and-pop affair, exercising power over workers, employees, consumers, local communities, national governments and global culture in ways that would have likely sent Smith reeling. Corporate defenders are also far too cavalier about what unregulated markets and unrestrained corporate power puts at risk. The panoply of consumer, environmental and workplace hazards are minimized or dismissed as second order problems that can easily be remedied, ignoring the fact that these remedies are only in place because people have used government to impose controls on what corporations do.

Finally, just because there are markets, doesn't mean that there is always real choice. Workers in particular have far fewer options than the corporation's defenders suggest. The existence of a job market doesn't mean that most people are free to move about at will, taking and leaving jobs that fail to satisfy. In fact, very few workers behave in the way that the market model imagines, picking up and moving from town to town, or state to state, in response to marginally better employment offers. To the contrary, to the extent that they have settled lives, most people's geographic mobility is quite limited. And there's no guarantee that having changed jobs, a worker will find him or herself in a substantially better situation. Trained in the same business schools, enamored of the same management theories, most employers run their workplaces in very similar ways.

The Myth of Equal Opportunity

Progressive government is especially important if we are to stand any chance of equalizing opportunity in America. Conservatives insist that the free market gives the average person his or her best shot at moving up, even getting rich some day. But free markets cannot promote equality of opportunity because equal opportunity requires that we do far more to equalize condition. Free markets cannot do that.

The bottom line is that people cannot compete on an equal footing when their "initial conditions" are radically unequal. No one would judge fair a footrace in which only some runners showed up at the starting line rested, in shape, and professionally trained, in other words, ready to compete, while others hobbled there, malnourished, sick, ignorant of the track or the rules of competition, having had no prior experience or training in the sport. Yet conservatives ask us to believe that we can have equality of opportunity despite the fact that some children have been advantaged since birth by superior educations, social connections, and family wealth, while others barely make it to school in the morning. Certainly, the exceptionally gifted among the most disadvantaged, the truly heroic, will succeed despite even these obstacles; these remarkable success stories are uplifting. But do the rest deserve their fate? Far too many Americans never get a chance to work at a good job, earn a decent income, or live in a safe neighborhood with good schools - not because they "failed," but because they never had much of a chance to succeed.

Whether or not we like to admit it, these initial conditions map rather closely the distribution of income and wealth in America. The only way to redress the problem is to assure greater equality of condition, making sure that everyone has a reasonably equal shot at early childhood education, enrichment classes, high quality public schools, good counseling, and letters of recommendation from well placed friends of the family. This sounds utopian. Nonetheless, the point stands. Equality of opportunity is intimately linked to equality of condition. And whether conservatives like it or not, only government can promote that sort of equality in a market capitalist society. No amount of private philanthropy can fill this gap.

Private philanthropy can't even compensate for the sorts of social welfare cuts that Republicans have in mind, let alone change the distribution of income and wealth in America. As a recent Century Foundation study shows, the total assets of the 34,000 charitable foundations that might be asked to play this role constitute only about 10% of what the government currently spends on social welfare and other, related programs.

The amount that these charities could actually spend on people in need in any given year is a minuscule fraction of what would be required. 15 However well meaning, the idea that we might replace or even substantially supplement the welfare state with a "Thousand Points of Light" is a fantasy. Without a serious collective, public effort to redistribute resources to the disadvantaged, income and wealth will remain sharply skewed in America.

The international record clearly supports this conclusion. In the most comprehensive analysis of why some Western capitalist societies are more unequal than others, Timothy Smeeding and his colleagues demonstrate conclusively that government makes the difference. Societies that have with larger public sectors have less economic inequality. Where capitalism is let loose, the gap between rich and poor grows. American's recent history confirms the point. 16 Since the 1980s, as both Republican and Democratic administrations have backed away from welfare-state commitments, income inequality has widened. The right finds in every success story proof that since these barriers can be overcome that most not be as consequential as the left believes. But the real question is not whether the truly gifted can rise above their circumstances, but whether this system treats fairly ordinary people who are making a reasonable effort. On this standard, America fails.

It is true that the American class system has never been as rigid and as obvious as in Europe. The visible signs of election are a bit subtler in a society in which everyone wears jeans and tees. Politics has never been organized around social standing in the same way, nor have the upper classes been treated with quite the same deference as elsewhere. As a result, European visitors like Alexis de Toqueville have often been misled by what they have seen and heard, confusing egalitarian rhetoric for real social equality. For their part, Americans have enjoyed the comparison, congratulating themselves on having avoided European-style class conflict.

But as anyone who has ventured out of his or her neighborhood knows, contemporary America is a very unequal society. The gap between the American rich and poor demands repeating. In the late 1990s, as the most robust economic expansion in decades was peaking, the average after-tax income of the top 1 % of American households (\$677,900) was 63 times the average after-tax income (\$10,800) of the poorest fifth. 17 And this was after the much-maligned "progressive income tax" had done its equalizing magic.

Statistics on the share of total, after-tax income taken home by various strata are even more striking. The top 1% of American households took home almost as large a share (13.6%) of total income as did the bottom 40% (15.0%). That means that the richest 2.6 million Americans, a tiny fraction of the society, earned almost as much as the poorest 100 million Americans. 18 And these super rich Americans own nearly 40% of all of the nation's wealth. 19 The gap between the rich and the middle class is equally remarkable in a society that makes so much of equal opportunity. That \$677,900 average after-tax income of the richest 1% of American households was 18 times the average after-tax income (\$37,200) of the middle fifth. 20

Inequality actually worsened as the economy improved. A small percentage of Americans benefited handsomely from the boom. From 1979 to 1997, the richest 1% increased their average household income by 157%. But the income of the poorest 20% actually declined, and the middle fifth gained a meager 10.1 % over this nearly two decade span. 21 In fact,

the ratio of the average household income in the top 1 % to the average household income in the middle fifth increased from 7.8/1 to 18.2/1 over this same time period. 22

Conservatives respond to these data in various ways. As Bush did in the 2000 presidential debates, some simply reject numbers they don't like, complaining about "fuzzy math." Other conservatives accept the data but question their implications. These numbers mislead, they argue, because they don't capture the dynamic character of the American economy and social structure. People are not fixed for life into whatever strata they were born. To the contrary, there's constant churning, as people's fortunes rise and fall. A snapshot may show great inequality, but over a lifetime, people experience significant mobility.

There's some truth to the point - we no longer live in a world of ascribed status where lord and peasant inherit their social positions and pass them on to their descendants. Some poor individuals and families are poor for only a while - perhaps while in school, or when out of work, or if newly divorced. Conservatives routinely roll out these examples to demonstrate the pitfalls of income and wealth distribution data. Unfortunately, in this case the statistics don't lie: the majority of low-income families have low-incomes for years at a time. Nearly three-quarters of young adults who were in the bottom 20% of income earners in 1968 were in the bottom 40% in 1991, 23 years later.²³ In fact, the available evidence indicates that income mobility is declining in the U.S.²⁴ The hard reality is that the majority of Americans live quite close to the economic edge. The half of American families that earn less than \$50,000 a year cannot help but struggle to meet simultaneously the costs of food, clothing, and shelter, let alone medical and elder care while saving for college and retirement. In this world, a week without work is a serious shock; a month of unemployment a major loss; a prolonged family illness a catastrophe that is almost impossible to recover from. With an average after-tax income of less than \$11,000 a year, the poorest fifth of Americans are living in truly dismal circumstances.

Contrary to the self-congratulatory rhetoric, not only does American capitalism display the same sort of class inequality typically associated with older, European societies, on all accounts, the U.S. is one of the more unequal of the world's capitalist democracies, typically at or near the bottom on most measures of income and wealth equality.²⁵ With income and wealth so skewed toward the top, the claim that Americans can compete on equal footing without help from the government cannot be taken seriously.

Right Vs Left

The right's refusal to admit, let alone address, these realities, has led to some rather dreadful political choices. Sad to say, conservatives have led the opposition nearly every social reform that has lightened the burden on the average American, or ended unconscionable discrimination against some minority group, or sought to protect some especially vulnerable population from the vicissitudes of the market.

In the early 20th century, as Progressivism peaked, conservatives opposed protective child labor legislation because it infringed on state's rights, and maximum hours legislation because it interfered with workers' "right of free contract." During the New Deal, as the country moved leftward, trying to cushion the blow of the Great Depression, conservatives opposed social security legislation because it violated traditional notions of self-help and individual responsibility, and wages and hours and labor legislation because it restricted the freedom of managers to dispose of their property as they wished. Even after the principle of government intervention into the economy had been well established in law and practice, conservatives fought the Great Society's efforts to set and enforce health, safety and environmental standards, arguing that corporations were eager to voluntarily clean up the air, water, and work, and that strict standards would make things worse, not better.

This knee-jerk opposition to anything progressive has only worsened in recent decades as conservative activists, typically from the South, have taken control of the Republican Party and forced on it their extreme right wing views on the economy, race, and labor. As a result, the party of Abraham Lincoln, once a strong supporter of civil rights, reversed field. In 1964, the Republicans adopted a platform that not only opposed federal civil rights legislation, but also declined to condemn the activities of racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

Since then, under conservative direction, the Republicans have attempted to undo nearly every aspect of the modern regulatory and welfare states. Beginning in 2001, the Bush White House and Congressional Republicans moved to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling, lift the limits on arsenic in drinking water, build more logging roads in the national forests, relax EPA rules that forced older coal power plants to meet modern standards when they renovated, end race-conscious college admission policies, cut spending on public assistance and Medicaid, privatize social security and Medicare, and, perhaps most significant, remove whatever elements of progressivity remain in the federal income tax code. In some cases, social security for example, when political extremism has cost them at the polls, conservatives have sought to cover their tracks, explaining their opposition to popular programs as the principled defense of the public purse and individual liberty against government waste and overbearing federal bureaucrats. Nonetheless, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that Americans would still be living in a Dickensian world if conservatives had won every election.

Why has the right chosen to fight such retrograde battles? It's partly a political calculation. The political coalitions that carry even the most moderate conservatives to power often include some very nasty people, from the paramilitary far-right to unreconstructed racists who still pine for the days before *Brown v. Board of Education*. These people expect and often get a seat at the table.

In this increasingly conservative climate, even the more respectable elements of the conservative coalition, from corporate elites to small-town, small business owners, have taken a harder line, rejecting legislation that might raise their costs or limit their ability to act as they wish toward employees and customers. In these cases, self-interest plays an obvious role. Progressive government is far more likely than market competition to empower the average person while reducing inequalities of income, wealth, or power. It's dangerous for this reason. Finally, some conservatives argue that whatever we might wish, human nature and the inevitable failings of government make it impossible to end discrimination, reduce inequality, or eliminate poverty through politics. The effort is futile.

But whatever the motivation, the end result is the same: conservatives have rarely been on the side of equal justice; it's fallen to the left to make capitalism serve the public interest. This is, of course, ironic. At the outset, the left first sought not to humanize but to overthrow capitalism, believing other, more collective, economic arrangements to be preferable. But having failed at revolution, the left ended up reforming capitalism - making it more livable for workers and the dispossessed. The welfare states that we now take for granted in North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand were built either by the left in power (by Social Democratic, Socialist, or Labor parties), or by political elites and moderate social reformers who, fearing that the left would triumph at the polls or in the streets, made concessions to working-class voters in order to avoid revolution. But in both cases, it was pressure from below, whether in the form of strikes, or mass protests, or the formation of radical political parties, that made structural change imperative.

Different countries have gotten here in different ways. In Denmark and Sweden, welfare state building preceded the emergence of a politically powerful, socialist working class. There, political elites initiated reforms in the early 20th century in order to avoid the (further) radicalization of workers. But once welfare-state building had begun, working class political parties took over, forging political alliances in the 1930s with farmers who were also seeking shelter from the free market. Later, political alliances between blue- and white-collar workers helped consolidate earlier gains, maintaining majority support for reform to the end of the century. 26

On the European continent, in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Italy, centrist governments under the control of religious parties or traditional conservative elites (not the laissez faire conservatives found in the U.S.) expanded social spending by providing generous transfer payments to support working families. In Great Britain, liberal elites, not labor party representatives, took the first steps toward state-sponsored economic security. 27 But in all cases, reform occurred as support for the left among workers and small farmers grew.

In the U.S., the left has been weaker because working class organizations have been weaker and working-class voters less class conscious. As a result, reformers have traveled a different, less radical route. Under the direction of liberals drawn from the middle classes and the professions, with less input from mass-based organizations, political reform movements from the Progressive period to the Great Society have pushed for incremental reforms rather than demand dramatic structural changes in the economy or political system. The radical left has still mattered in American politics; liberals have

gotten many of their best ideas from it, from unemployment insurance to the progressive income tax. But because they haven't had the support of a more militant, class-conscious political movement, liberal reformers have had to settle for less - for fewer limits on corporate power and fewer restrictions on the free market.

Here and abroad, most reforms imposed by the left on capitalism have survived into the 21st century because they have measurably changed people's lives. The right acts as if the power of modern government is, at best, a mistake, or worse, a plot by liberals to enslave the people and replace capitalism with socialism - that government has expanded because liberals, in league with government bureaucrats, want to take our freedoms and turn America into some sort of Soviet-style dictatorship. But whether or not every one of the things government does is inappropriate, the inescapable fact is that government has grown because the market has not been enough.

Until recently, voters have understood this and been willing to defend reform against the right's assault. But progressives have been on the defensive here and abroad for two decades. Retrenchment is occurring everywhere as the left has weakened and global capitalism has spread. Further reform is likely to depend on the reemergence of a left that can challenge corporate power and restructure political institutions so that progressive voices can be heard.

Obviously, this sort of project has become even harder in an increasingly internationalized economy. As capitalism has become global, free markets have pushed back the public sphere and transnational corporations have found it even easier to exercise political influence. Without supervision from transnational institutions, governmental or nongovernmental, both may prove even harder to control than before. But progressives can take heart from the history: people want more than capitalism alone can deliver.

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Friday, December 3, 2010

Bernie Sanders: A Real Jaw Dropper at the Federal Reserve

A Real Jaw Dropper at the Federal Reserve

by Sen. Bernie Sanders [article link](#) [article link](#)
December 3, 2010 | The Huffington Post | CommonDreams

At a Senate Budget Committee hearing in 2009, I asked Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke to tell the American people the names of the financial institutions that received an unprecedented backdoor bailout from the Federal Reserve, how much they received, and the exact terms of this assistance. [He refused](#). A year and a half later, as a result of an [amendment](#) (pdf) that I was able to include in the Wall Street reform bill, we have begun to lift the veil of secrecy at the Fed, and the American people now have this information.

It is unfortunate that it took this long, and it is a shame that the biggest banks in America and Mr. Bernanke fought to keep this secret from the American public every step of the way. But, the details on this bailout are now on the [Federal Reserve's website](#), and this is a major victory for the American taxpayer and for transparency in government.

Importantly, my amendment also required the Government Accountability Office to conduct a top-to-bottom audit of all of the emergency lending the Fed provided during the financial crisis to be completed on July 21, 2011, which will take a hard look at all of the potential conflicts of interest that took place with respect to this bailout. So, in many respects, details that the Fed was forced to divulge on Wednesday about the \$3.3 trillion in emergency loans that until now were totally kept from public scrutiny, marked the beginning, not the end, of lifting the veil of secrecy at the Fed.

After years of stonewalling by the Fed, the American people are finally learning the incredible and jaw-dropping details of the Fed's multi-trillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street and corporate America. As a result of this disclosure, other members of Congress and I will be taking a very extensive look at all aspects of how the Federal Reserve functions and how we can make our financial institutions more responsive to the needs of ordinary Americans and small businesses.

What have we learned so far from the disclosure of more than 21,000 transactions? We have learned that the \$700 billion Wall Street bailout signed into law by President George W. Bush turned out to be pocket change compared to the trillions and trillions of dollars in near-zero interest loans and other financial arrangements the Federal Reserve doled out to every major financial institution in this country. Among those are Goldman Sachs, which received nearly \$600 billion; Morgan Stanley, which received nearly \$2 trillion; Citigroup, which received \$1.8 trillion; Bear Stearns, which received nearly \$1 trillion, and Merrill Lynch, which received some \$1.5 trillion in short term loans from the Fed.

We also learned that the Fed's multi-trillion bailout was not limited to Wall Street and big banks, but that some of the largest corporations in this country also received a very substantial bailout. Among those are General Electric, McDonald's, Caterpillar, Harley Davidson, Toyota and Verizon.

Perhaps most surprising is the huge sum that went to bail out foreign private banks and corporations including two European megabanks -- Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse -- which were the largest beneficiaries of the Fed's purchase of mortgage-backed securities.

Deutsche Bank, a German lender, sold the Fed more than \$290 billion worth of mortgage securities. Credit Suisse, a Swiss bank, sold the Fed more than \$287 billion in mortgage bonds.

Has the Federal Reserve of the United States become the central bank of the world?

The Fed said that this bailout was necessary to prevent the world economy from going over a cliff. But three years after the start of the recession, millions of Americans remain unemployed and have lost their homes, life savings and ability to send their kids to college. Meanwhile, big banks and corporations have returned to making huge profits and paying their executives record-breaking compensation packages as if the financial crisis they started never happened.

What this disclosure tells us, among many other things, is that despite this huge taxpayer bailout, the Fed did not make the appropriate demands on these institutions necessary to rebuild our economy and protect the needs of ordinary Americans.

For example, at a time when big banks have nearly a trillion dollars in excess reserves parked at the Fed, the Fed did not require these institutions to increase lending to small- and medium-sized businesses as a condition of the bailout.

At a time when large corporations are more profitable than ever, the Fed did not demand that corporations that received this backdoor bailout create jobs and expand the economy once they returned to profitability.

I intend to investigate whether these secret Fed loans, in some cases, turned out to be direct corporate welfare to big banks that used these loans not to reinvest in the economy but rather to lend back to the federal government at a higher rate of interest by purchasing Treasury Securities. Instead of using this money to reinvest in the productive economy, I suspect a large portion of these near-zero interest loans were used to buy Treasury Securities at a higher interest rate providing free money to some of the largest financial institutions in this country. That is something that we have got to closely examine.

At a time when Wall Street executives are now making more money than before the financial crisis, how many big banks that paid back TARP funds in 2009 to avoid limits on executive compensation received no-strings-attached loans from the Federal Reserve?

At a time when millions of Americans are paying outrageously high credit card interest rates, why didn't the Fed require credit card issuers to lower interest rates as a condition of the bailout?

The four largest banks in this country (Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Wells Fargo, and Citigroup) issue half of all mortgages in this country. We now know that these banks received hundreds of billions from the Fed. How many Americans could have remained in their homes, if the Fed required these bailed-out banks to reduce mortgage payments as a condition of receiving these secret loans?

We have begun to lift the veil of secrecy at one of most important agencies in our government. What we are seeing is the incredible power of a small number of people who have incredible conflicts of interest getting incredible help from the taxpayers of this country while ignoring the needs of the people.

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[Bernie Sanders](#) was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006 after serving 16 years in the House of Representatives. He is the longest serving independent member of Congress in American history.

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David Krieger: Changing the Climate of Complacency

Changing the Climate of Complacency

by David Krieger [article link](#)

December 3, 2010 | CommonDreams

Representatives of governments and civil society organizations are gathered in Cancun to take action on the climate change that is threatening our beautiful but beleaguered planet. The changes, which are resulting in global warming, pose extremely dangerous threats to quality of life and even survival for people today and in the future. We must heed the warnings of scientists who are examining this phenomenon and change our habits with regard to fossil fuel consumption and carbon emissions. We must dramatically lower our fossil fuel consumption and our carbon imprint on the planet and this must be undertaken immediately and seriously by the over-industrialized nations that are the worst energy and resource abusers.

There is another way in which the term "climate change" may be used. That is, to refer to "climate" in the sense of "ambiance." There is a strong need to change the climate of our thinking, specifically the passive acceptance of the abuse of our planet and its myriad species, including our own. In this sense, humanity lives far too much in a "climate" of ignorance and indifference. We have organized ourselves into consumer societies that demonstrate little concern for our responsibilities to the planet, to each other and to the future.

There are many ongoing problems in the world that deserve our awareness and engagement. The fact that these problems receive insufficient attention and action speak to the change of climate that is needed. Many of these problems were identified in the eight Millennium Development Goals: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality; reducing child mortality; reducing maternal mortality; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and establishing a global partnership for development.

While these major problems on our planet are not adequately addressed, the world is wasting more than \$1.5 trillion annually on its military establishments. Many states are attempting to create military security at the expense of human security. The poor people on the planet are being marginalized while countries use their scientific resources and material wealth to produce ever more deadly and destructive armaments. In a climate of complacency, the military-industrial complexes of the world fulfill their gluttonous appetites while the poor and politically powerless of the Earth are left to suffer and die.

At the apex of the global order, the countries that emerged victorious in World War II anointed themselves as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. They continue to flaunt international law by their reliance upon nuclear weapons and by failing to engage in good-faith negotiations for the elimination of these weapons as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Because these countries behave as though their power and prestige are built upon these weapons of mass annihilation, other countries seek to emulate them. Nuclear proliferation is thus encouraged by the very states that seek to set themselves apart with these weapons.

Large corporations that stand to profit from a "renaissance" of nuclear power are promoting large nuclear energy projects as an alternative to using fossil fuels. They are trying to make nuclear power appear to be green. But they have not solved the four major problems with nuclear power: the potential for nuclear weapons proliferation; the failure to find any reasonable solution to storing the nuclear wastes, which will threaten the environment and humanity for tens of thousands of years; vulnerability to terrorism; and propensity to dangerous accidents.

If the large global corporations have their way, the Earth will become home for thousands of nuclear power plants, nations will seek to protect themselves with nuclear weapons (an impossibility), the threat of nuclear annihilation and global warming will continue to hang over our collective heads, extreme poverty in its many manifestations will persist, and we will follow either a slow path to extinction or a rapid one.

This is why we must change the climate of indifference and complacency that currently prevails upon our planet. We humans have the gifts of consciousness and conscience, but these gifts must be used to be effective. We must become conscious of what threatens our common future and we must care enough to demand that these threats be eliminated. The only force powerful enough to challenge the corporate and military power that is leading us to catastrophe is the power of an engaged global citizenry. This remains the one truly great superpower on Earth, but it can only be activated by compassion and caring.

If we do not care enough about the future to engage in the fight to save our species from catastrophe and our planet from omnicide, we need only to continue our complacency and leave the important decisions about protecting the environment and human life to powerful corporations and the world's militaries. They have a plan, one based upon dangerous technologies and plunder. Their plan is shortsighted, designed to further enrich the already overly rich. To be silent is a vote for their plan.

As Albert Camus, the great French writer and existentialist, wrote in the immediate aftermath of the Hiroshima bombing: "Our technical civilization has just reached its greatest level of savagery. We will have to choose, in the more or less near future, between collective suicide and the intelligent use of our scientific conquests. Before the terrifying prospects now available to humanity, we see even more clearly that peace is the only battle worth waging. This is no longer a prayer but a demand to be made by all peoples to their governments - a demand to choose definitively between hell and reason."

Let us stand with Camus in waging peace. Let us stand with Camus in choosing reason. Let us raise our voices and choose peace and a human future. Let us fulfill the responsibility of each generation to pass the world on intact to the next

generation. We may be the only generation that has faced the choice of silence and annihilation, or engagement and rebuilding the paradise of our exceedingly precious planet, the only one we know of in the universe that supports life.

David Krieger is President of the [Nuclear Age Peace Foundation](#) and the Chair of the Executive Committee of the [International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility](#). He is a Councilor on the [World Future Council](#).

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Catastrophic Blizzards, Heat Waves and Floods: Global Warming or Just Crazy Weather?

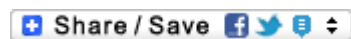
Should we be talking about extreme weather events as evidence of global warming?

The experts weigh in.

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Thursday, December 2, 2010

Robert C. Koehler: The Invisible Government

The Invisible Government

by Robert C. Koehler [article link](#)

December 2, 2010 | CommonDreams

Once again, the curtain of secrecy is drawn back and Olympus looks more like Oz. The machinations of empire turn out to be banal and ordinary.

In a time of endless war, when democracy is an orchestrated charade and citizen engagement is less welcome in the corridors of power than it has ever been, when the traditional checks and balances of government are in unchallenged collusion with one another, when the media act not as watchdogs of democracy but guard dogs of the interests and clichés of the status quo . . . we have WikiLeaks, disrupting the game of national security, ringing its bell, changing the rules.

“Never before in history,” writes *Der Spiegel*, one of five international publications to get advance copies of more than 250,000 State Department cables dating back to 1966, “has a superpower lost control of such vast amounts of such sensitive information — data that can help paint a picture of the foundation upon which US foreign policy is built.”

The revelations so far seem less significant than the fact that the American government's bin of secrets has — once again — been raided, and that the raw data of diplomacy has been strewn across cyberspace, for the likes of you and me to ogle and, if we choose, draw our own conclusions. We get to have real-time looks at how geopolitics actually works.

While temporary secrecy, or at least privacy, is sometimes necessary in any endeavor, permanent secrecy — secrecy as entitlement — is nothing but dangerous. Over the last several decades, with an enormous push from the Bush administration, we have devolved toward a secrecy state, with more and more information hidden from American citizens in the spurious name of national security. Meanwhile, the government and the corporotocracy have pursued war and global dominance with impunity.

So Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's claim that WikiLeaks has put lives in danger — the lives of “human rights activists, religious leaders, the critics of governments who speak to members of our embassy about abuses in their own country” — is not only a red herring, in that there is no evidence that anyone has been harmed by any of the hundreds of thousands of classified items about the war on terror that WikiLeaks has liberated so far this year, but sanctimonious damage control, implying that under normal circumstances the U.S. government cares about such lives.

“If it's loss of life the U.S. government is concerned about, it should begin with paying more attention to the soldiers and civilians it's putting in harm's way every hour in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Pierre Tristram writes at FlaglerLive.com.

The sort of data WikiLeaks has outed this time around seems less than shocking, but nonetheless revealing. We now know, for instance, that various tiny nations haggled with U.S. diplomats over the amount of money they would get if they took in a released Guantanamo prisoner; and that American diplomats' behind-the-scenes assessments of foreign leaders were sometimes blunt and unflattering, unlike the smiling niceties uttered for public consumption in front of the TV cameras.

This is no more than Truth 101, compelling in the way the sheer, raw detail of truth is always compelling.

Perhaps the biggest revelation of the outed cables so far is what they don't say, as [Noam Chomsky](#) discussed a few days ago on “[Democracy Now!](#)” What our diplomats aren't talking about, and don't particularly care about, is what ordinary Arabs think, he said, citing a Brookings Institution poll in which 80 percent of Arabs said they regard the U.S. and Israel as major threats, while only 10 percent see Iran as a threat.

“What that reveals is the profound hatred for democracy on the part of our political leadership and the Israeli political leadership,” Chomsky said. “These things aren't even to be mentioned. This seeps its way all through the diplomatic service. . . . When they talk about Arabs, they mean the Arab dictators, not the population.”

An obsession with secrecy is always anti-democratic; it's an obsession with domination, control and the maintenance of power — and it's a perfectly natural temptation for those in positions of great power. They want to cut their deals in private and present a face of Olympian righteousness in public.

According to the [New York Times Lede Blog](#), WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange began a manifesto he wrote four years ago, explaining the purpose of the organization, with a 1912 quote from Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party platform:

“Behind the ostensible government sits enthroned an invisible government, owing no allegiance and acknowledging no responsibility to the people. To destroy this invisible government, to dissolve the unholy alliance between corrupt business and corrupt politics is the first task of the statesmanship of the day.”

The invisible government has always been in power. The continuously revolutionary premise of democracy is that power itself — the power to dominate and exert one's will — must not be allowed to coalesce in a single individual or institution, but must be constantly challenged, broken down and redistributed. I fear that most Americans, or at least the media they stay glued to, are content with a charade democracy. That's why WikiLeaks is controversial.

Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. His new book, [Courage Grows Strong at the Wound](#) (Xenos Press) is now available for pre-orders. Contact him at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his website [Common Wonders](#).

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Wikileaks: A Government Caught Up in Mendacity and Lies

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WikiLeaks vs. the Political Class

Why they hate Julian Assange

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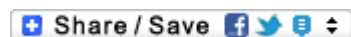
Where To Go From Wikileaks?

The Peace Movement Responds

By Cindy Sheehan [article link](#)

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Hanukkah: Rededication to God and Community

Feast of Dedication: Hanukkah/Chanukah

The Feast of Dedication [Chanukah; the Festival of Lights] to GOD and to His Temple must be honored by the Church of God (COG), just as Christ did [John 10:22-28]: [G] our dedication to God our Father, [O] our dedication to Others, through the body of Christ, [D] our dedication to the destruction of the works of the Devil [his systemic], by growing in grace and knowledge through God's Holy Spirit !! -- the continued use of the world's systemic by the COG is a validation of that which is and the inability to commit to that which ought to be, and we affirm a different vision of strength - God's strength [the application of His word] is dependent on our ability to create a world of love and caring, a world of peace and justice, a world in which every human being is treated as an embodiment of the Spirit of God [the community of God]; ** the works that we do in our Father's name, bear *witness* of us **.

Chislev 25 Festival of Lights or Dedication - beginning of the Jewish eight-day celebration in memory of the dedication of the altar in 164 B.C. after it had been defiled by Antiochus IV on the same date in 167 B.C. (Dan. 11:31; see also John 10:22).

Lexicon G1456 egkainia; AV - feast of dedication 1) dedication, consecration; in particular the annual feast celebrated eight days beginning in the 25th of Chislev, instituted by Judas Maccabaeus [B.C. 164] in memory of the cleansing of the temple from the pollution of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Chislev XXV The Feast of Dedication, viz. of the temple, profaned by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes, and repaired and purified by the care of Judas Maccabeus ["the hammer" or Maccabee]. This festival Christ honored with his presence at Jerusalem. It is likewise called the Feast of Lights because, during the time of its celebration, the people used to illuminate their houses, by setting up candles at every one's door; I Mac. iv. 52., II Mac. ii. 16., John x. 22.

John 10:22. And it was at Jerusalem the ** feast of the dedication **, and it was winter. 23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. 24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: *the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me*. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. 30 I and [my] Father are one.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? 33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. 34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, ** Ye are gods? ** 35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? 37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. 38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, ** believe the works **: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father [is] in me, and I in him.

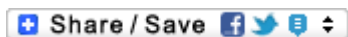
The spiritual message of who, and what we are, our responsibilities [John 10:34; the Family of God, our self-awareness], and of the "spiritual warfare" that we are engaged in [one definition (occurrence) of evil is our lack of awareness, the absence of *ourselves* (we are a part of God, and our absence is an absence of God's presence) both within and without the COG] - the COG is rededicated by keeping the Feast of Dedication on Chislev 25 for eight days [one day's oil burned for eight days symbolizing the miracle of the Holy Spirit; circumcision (physical) on the eighth day (spiritually of the heart); Mary impregnated by the Holy Spirit most likely at this time, Christ was "conceived" at the time of the winter solstice when the night and darkness are longest; the "light" of the world] - a candle is lit each evening [using a Menorah], with each day of celebration focused on a different aspect of God's community [our "agape" relationship with God and with each other] - **Chanukah celebrates the world's first recorded national liberation struggle; a message to the COG that we must not worship at the altar of this world's economic, political and cultural "reality," that we must overthrow all bondage [secular as-well-as religious], that we must rededicate God's Temple [which is *each-and-every one of us*] to God !!** [preceding paragraphs outlined on Tikkun Magazine, Nov/Dec.2000]

The *will* to define our existence must be *God's Will* !! - we are *all* inspired and backed by God [the common fellowship] - we are to give of our gifts, to make a contribution, to the body of Christ, including the body of knowledge and wisdom [the application of that knowledge; the power of God] - we must promote the advancement of knowledge and dialogue, honestly seeking understanding of any resultant conflicts, we must build on the foundation, the existing truths [the template], all-the-while realizing that knowledge without wisdom is like faith without works - we must utilize *all* that God gives us [faith, reason, revelation, etc.] and realize that blind rejection [without due recourse] is *not* protection of belief [we can easily be the source of each other's negation] - many different attitudes, approaches, methods and conclusions will be represented [we are the human face of God], a substantial exchange of views, all-the-while trusting God to bring the harmony !! -- this *community of mind*, a complete and authentic presence of individual, begotten human beings, one to another, inspiring each other with the courage to take the risk of being the source of each other's completion, in the full faith of Jesus Christ, reverencing the animating Spirit that dwells within and among us - that which links us is what *ennobles* us and we must be cognizant of this because *holocaust*, the horror of our monstrous *failure of connection* in the COG, will be the tragic result if we don't !!

Our fellowship must have the *possession of God's mind*, must be fully prepared to show by words or teaching, to do justice to, to protect and defend, the truth of God, and must be ready to refute and to destroy [to cast out and to cast down], *all* decisions, reasoning's and judgments, that are opposed to, or against, the knowledge of God [and the application of that knowledge (worship and power and wisdom); the spiritual gifts], including the underlying consciousness and systemic structures [the "high things", the "higher powers" of hierarchy both secular and religious]; THOSE SELF-EXALTED

AGAINST GOD utilizing the suppression of spontaneity, the enacting of roles, the pervasive imposition of "acceptable" behavior, the ensuing artificiality and stress, and, finally, the collective experience that simultaneously divides a group of people by an infinite distance and unites them in the false communion of being-other-than-themselves together !!

The *perfected and gifted fellowship* must *STILL* the enemy within and without the COG, and the avenger [the curse, the Tribulation holocaust] by the *power of God*, the strength ordained !! -- there is simply no depth of evil to which a church/society cannot sink once it abandons love as its governing principle, and the test of love's authenticity is that in its presence nobody gets harmed !! - therefore the "imaginary and false community" that purports to satisfy our need for connectedness and recognition always reveals its duplicity by having to generate an *unworthy class of non-members* to outwardly personify the "haunting inner demon" of personal alienation - true "agape love" realizes itself through the *affirmation of the other*; we are, to varying degrees and in the aggregate, *blind*, and in our blindness we injure ourselves and our world; we become *lame* - we must examine with righteous perseverance the symptoms and causes of alienation wherever they manifest themselves; we must be *healed* !! [preceding paragraphs outlined on Tikkun, Jan/Feb.2001, pp.66-67]



Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:35 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Wednesday, December 1, 2010

[Robert E. Prasch: 'Disaster Capitalism' Comes to Ireland](#)

'Disaster Capitalism' Comes to Ireland

by Robert E. Prasch [article link](#)

December 1, 2010 | CommonDreams

"History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme." – Mark Twain

The story has become the stuff of legend. Years ago, an informal group of free-market oriented civil servants, politicians, economists, and “in the know” media types, gathered periodically for beery conversation at the Dublin pub of Doheny & Nesbitts. Acquiring power and influence, they induced Ireland to accept the modern elixir of Neoliberalism. Taxes on corporations and incomes were lowered (even as more regressive forms of taxation were enhanced), privatization was embraced, financial markets deregulated, import duties reduced, and the nation adopted a fixed exchange rate (the Euro) to enhance the flow of foreign investment. European money poured into the country, real estate prices and stock market quotations took off, and Irish banks booked profits on their increasingly leveraged portfolio of commercial and mortgage loans. Although the banks were deregulated and largely unsupervised, few evinced concern. After all, did not the flow of funds from banks across Europe represent an endorsement of Irish banking policies and practices? Besides, didn't Alan Greenspan and Lawrence Summers point out that financial markets are self-supervising and self-regulating?

With credit expanding rapidly, Irish business conditions appeared to have moved permanently to a new level. With a massive surge in the building of commercial real estate and high-end condos, old downtowns were suddenly ‘fabulous’ and pricey. The newly prosperous were highly visible and conspicuous consumption was increasingly the norm. Jobs were being created in a service sector expanding rapidly to meet the whims of the ‘great and the good,’ along with the multitude aspiring to join or mimic them. Neither was the middle class neglected. Banks now flush with excess funds were offering low interest rates that, when conjoined with sharply reduced lending standards, allowed the middle class to purchase these increasingly expensive homes. But, again, there was no need for worry. With Ireland's ‘economic miracle’ firmly in place, incomes and home prices would undoubtedly continue their rise.

“Stein's Law,” famously promulgated by the late economist Herbert Stein, maintains that “If a process can not go on forever, it will stop.” Ireland's bubble, like all the others, had to end. Sadly for the utopian purveyors of free-market ideology, financial bubbles are disinclined to dissipate gradually; their tendency is to implode. Ireland's bubble is imploding.

The Irish authorities fell back upon a time-honored script. Initially they emphatically denied that a problem, much less a bank solvency problem, existed. Although the stock market was declining rapidly from its highs of May 2007 (it is now off by 70%), and foreclosures and unemployment were rising quickly, the government asserted that the problem was only a passing seizing up that could be readily fixed with a once-off dose of liquidity. Betting the public's money on their hollow assertions, the government boldly (and recklessly) guaranteed the payment of all depositors and senior bondholders of the nation's major banks (the latter being predominantly foreign banks). Little was asked of banks in return for this largesse, neither cuts in dividends nor changes in management nor reduction of leverage ratios, etc. Of course, the terms did mean that shareholders and subordinated bondholders (mostly Irish citizens and savers), and taxpayers would be left to take whatever losses ensued.

Given their overexposure to shaky real estate loans, and the steady withdrawal of large funders and counterparties, the banks continued to hemorrhage red ink even after these guarantees and loans went through. It was, or should have been, immediately evident that the banks' losses would be greater than the government's resources. However, these initial loans and guarantees did hold up long enough to enable well-placed insiders, and many of the more nimble and adroit outside investors, to exit before the final denouement. Of more lasting consequence, the government's initial response transformed a severe banking crisis into a broader and more damaging fiscal crisis. Coming so soon after Argentina and Iceland, this script and how it would progress should have been reasonably clear to the authorities. According to Morgan Kelly, an economist at University College Dublin, "Ireland faced a painful choice between imposing a resolution on banks that were too big to save or becoming insolvent, and, for whatever reason, chose the latter." (The Irish Times, Nov. 8, 2010)

By agreeing to their bailout offer, Ireland's government will soon owe the International Monetary Fund and European Union substantial sums of money denominated in a currency (the Euro) they cannot issue. By design, this fact limits their policy responses to squeezing their own citizenry. Considering: (1) the size of the loan relative to the size of the Ireland's GDP and government revenues, (2) the state of the economy today and its prospects over the near-to-medium future, and (3) the relatively high (5.8%) interest rate, default may be a more reasonable option. Perceiving this possibility, the terms set by the IMF/EU demand that the emergency loan include a substantial 'buy in' out of the monies previously set aside for Ireland's National Pensions Reserve Fund. This will, as one prominent EU official so disarmingly admits, shore up the Irish public's "ownership and commitment" to the plan. Stated simply, the livelihoods of Irish pensioners will now be hostages to this agreement.

So the stage has been set. The IMF, EU, and Irish government have all agreed that the best way forward is to shift the costs and risks associated with the rescuing these banks to those who had nothing to do with making the decisions that created this fiasco, and who benefitted the least. More and higher taxes for the middle and working classes, lower wages for state employees, higher tuition for students, and less assistance for the poor and unemployed are all in the works. The budget even reduces allowances for the parents of young children! Higher income groups, the wealthy, corporations, almost all bank executives, and foreign lenders to Irish banks (who should, and could, have done their 'due diligence'), will be rescued.

[Naomi Klein](#) coined the phrase "disaster capitalism" to describe the practice – long ago perfected by the IMF, the World Bank, and the United States Treasury – of taking advantage of the political turmoil induced by a financial crisis to push through otherwise unpopular or undesirable economic 'reforms.' The IMF/EU bankers and bureaucrats have clearly perceived an exceptional opportunity in the Irish crisis. Consider that for at least five years, the EU and prominent Irish business interests have been pressing homeowners to accept water meters so that they can pay for water on a per-unit basis, undoubtedly as a prelude to full privatization. Likewise, business interests have an almost instinctive dislike for minimum wages. Can anyone be surprised to learn that the IMF/EU's loans are conditional on the widespread installation of water meters and a reduced minimum wage? What do water meters and minimum wages have to do with the lax bank lending standards, deregulation, and the irresponsible government decisions that created, nurtured, and ultimately federalized this banking crisis? Nothing. As neither of these policies will do much to enhance Ireland's ability to raise the revenues required to pay these onerous loans, it should be evident that their rationale lies elsewhere.

It is evident that Ireland's best way forward is a return to solid economic growth. While difficult politically, an outline of the economics is fairly straight-forward. The first step is to reject the proposed IMF/EU loan while reinstating an independent Irish currency. This will allow the Irish Central Bank to set interest rates best suited to domestic needs, and

establish an exchange rate favorable to a healthy balance of trade surplus. The next step would be a renegotiation of the debt (with debt-holders being made to understand that the alternative, as in Argentina, will be a unilateral offer by the government). A stimulus of the economy through greater government spending (ideally an explicit jobs bill), and the establishment of an effective resolution to homeowner over-indebtedness are also needed. Alternatively, the Irish could live under an economic policy imposed by unelected and unaccountable foreign overseers – just as they did during 800 years of English hegemony.

Robert E. Prasch is a professor of economics at Middlebury College where he teaches courses on Monetary Theory and Policy, Macroeconomics, American Economic History, and the History of Economic Thought. His latest book is [How Markets Work: Supply, Demand and the 'Real World'](#) (Edward Elgar, 2008).

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Radio Ecoshock Show:

[Naomi Klein explains her new book](#) "Shock Doctrine, The Rise of Disaster Capitalism"

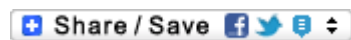
Ireland's Debt Servitude

by Ambrose Evans-Pritchard [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 30, 2010 | Daily Telegraph | LewRockwell

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:18 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Paul Craig Roberts: Who precisely is attacking the world?

Who precisely is attacking the world?

By Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#)

December 1, 2010 | OpEdNews

The stuck pigs are squealing. To shift the onus from the US State Department, Hillary Clinton paints Wikileaks' release of the "diplomatic cables" as an "attack on the international community." To reveal truth is equivalent in the eyes of the US government to an attack on the world.

It is Wikileaks' fault that all those US diplomats wrote a quarter of a million undiplomatic messages about America's allies, a.k.a., puppet states. It is also Wikileaks' fault that a member of the US government could no longer stomach the cynical ways in which the US government manipulates foreign governments to serve, not their own people, but American interests, and delivered the incriminating evidence to Wikileaks.

The US government actually thinks that it was Wikileaks patriotic duty to return the evidence and to identify the leaker. After all, we mustn't let the rest of the world find out what we are up to. They might stop believing our lies.

The influential German magazine, Der Spiegel, writes: "It is nothing short of a political meltdown for US foreign policy."

This might be more a hope than a reality. The "Soviet threat" during the second half of the 20th century enabled US governments to create institutions that subordinated the interests of other countries to those of the US government. After decades of following US leadership, European "leaders" know no other way to act. Finding out that the boss badmouths and deceives them is unlikely to light a spirit of independence. At least not until America's economic collapse becomes more noticeable.

The question is: how much will the press tell us about the documents? Spiegel itself has said that the magazine is permitting the US government to censor, at least in part, what it prints about the leaked material. Most likely, this means the

public will not learn the content of the 4,330 documents that "are so explosive that they are labelled 'NOFORN,'" meaning that foreigners, including presidents, prime ministers, and security services that share information with the CIA, are not permitted to read the documents. Possibly, also, the content of the 16,652 cables classified as "secret" will not be revealed to the public.

Most likely the press, considering their readers' interests, will focus on gossip and the unflattering remarks Americans made about their foreign counterparts. It will be good for laughs. Also, the US government will attempt to focus the media in ways that advance US policies.

Indeed, it has already begun. On November 29, National Public Radio emphasized that the cables showed that Iran was isolated even in the Muslim world, making it easier for the Israelis and Americans to attack. The leaked cables reveal that the president of Egypt, an American puppet, hates Iran, and the Saudi Arabian government has been long urging the US government to attack Iran. In other words, Iran is so dangerous to the world that even its co-religionists want Iran wiped off the face of the earth.

NPR presented several nonobjective "Iranian experts" who denigrated Iran and its leadership and declared that the US government, by resisting its Middle Eastern allies' calls for bombing Iran, was the moderate in the picture. The fact that President George W. Bush declared Iran to be a member of "the axis of evil" and threatened repeatedly to attack Iran, and that President Obama has continued the threats -- Adm. Michael Mullen, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, has just reiterated that the US hasn't taken the attack option off the table -- are not regarded by American "Iran experts" as indications of anything other than American moderation.

Somehow it did not come across the NPR newscast that it is not Iran but Israel that routinely slaughters civilians in Lebanon, Gaza, and the West Bank, and that it is not Iran but the US and its NATO mercenaries who slaughter civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Pakistan.

Iran has not invaded any of its neighbors, but the Americans are invading countries halfway around the globe.

The "Iranian experts" treated the Saudi and Egyptian rulers' hatred of Iran as a vindication of the US and Israeli governments' demonization of Iran. Not a single "Iranian expert" was capable of pointing out that the tyrants who rule Egypt and Saudi Arabia fear Iran because the Iranian government represents the interests of Muslims, and the Saudi and Egyptian governments represent the interests of the Americans.

Think what it must feel like to be a tyrant suppressing the aspirations of your own people in order to serve the hegemony of a foreign country, while a nearby Muslim government strives to protect its people's independence from foreign hegemony.

Undoubtedly, the tyrants become very anxious. What if their oppressed subjects get ideas? Little wonder the Saudis and Egyptian rulers want the Americans to eliminate the independent-minded country that is a bad example for Egyptian and Saudi subjects.

As long as the dollar has enough value that it can be used to purchase foreign governments, information damaging to the US government is unlikely to have much effect. As Alain of Lille said a long time ago, "money is all."

Paul Craig Roberts was an editor of the Wall Street Journal and an Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. His latest book, [HOW THE ECONOMY WAS LOST](#), has just been published by CounterPunch/AK Press.

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Wikileaks Exposes Complicity of the Press

By Gareth Porter [article link](#)

December 1, 2010 | Counterpunch

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:14 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Sherwood Ross: Assange Is Headed For Prosecution

Assange Is Headed For Prosecution For Publishing The Truth About U.S

By Sherwood Ross [article link](#)

December 01, 2010 | Countercurrents

Maybe because he's from Australia, a U.S. satrap on the far rim of the American Empire, that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange doesn't know that Washington does not allow anyone to steal information unless it orders them to do so. Attorney General Eric Holder, the Obama hack who will not prosecute CIA thugs for torture and murder, says he is mounting a criminal investigation against Assange because anyone who breaks American law "will be held responsible." Prosecuting CIA Mafioso just doesn't excite Holder. Threatening Assange for releasing a quarter of a million of the Empire's secret files, does, especially since Assange did not alter or prettify them but released them in their unexpurgated state. Assange may or may not have raped a couple of Swedish ladies, as that spineless government suddenly needs to know, but there is no question he has disrobed the Statue of Liberty and shown all the world the whore she has become.

As for [Bradley Manning](#), the Army PFC suspected of pilfering the evidence of Yankee cupidity and supplying it to Assange, he is being given free public housing in the Marine Corps brig in Quantico, Va., on suspicion of previous disclosures of the Truth, and the Pentagon would love to throw away the key. Let him rot his life away in the company of the 2.5-million prisoners now overcrowding our vast penal colony for such insidious crimes as selling a joint. Manning's crime, as reported by AP, is: "I want people to see the truth...because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public." And with an attitude like that you can't go far in a country whose government is bent on controlling the planet and doesn't want its sinister operations revealed. For his part, Assange told The London Telegraph President Obama has a record of arresting whistle-blowers and that he runs "a regime that doesn't believe in the freedom of the press and doesn't act like it believes it."

Leading the charge against Assange is State Department boss Hillary Clinton, who said the release of the confidential files is "an attack on the international community," a comment which pretty much sums up her own conduct as revealed by WikiLeaks. It is Ms. Clinton, after all, who has been doing the attacking. She ordered her diplomats to spy on Ban Ki-moon, the secretary general of the United Nations, as well as on the UN Security Council representatives from China, Russia, France, and UK; the UN undersecretaries, the heads of the UN specialized agencies; the heads of UN peace-keeping operations, and foreign officials apparently in a score of countries. As the UK Guardian reported Nov. 28th, Washington wanted "credit card numbers, email addresses, phone, fax and pager numbers and even frequent-flyer account numbers for UN figures and 'biographic and biometric information'..." It also wanted to know of any plans by UN officials "to press for potentially embarrassing investigations into the U.S. treatment of detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay," the Guardian said. So it has come to pass that the republic once cherished for birthing the ideals of individual liberty, including privacy, is now the world's spymaster, jailer, warmonger, torturer, and, yes, mass killer, the only nation that has used nuclear fire and which now threatens others with its use.

It is, FYI, illegal for the U.S. to bug the UN's phones as it did during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq to find out how other countries were voting. But while Obama and Clinton are outraged that their own correspondence has been made public, the U.S. National Security Agency has been tapping telephones the world over. Together with junior partners UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, the U.S. operates ECHELON, a global network of interception stations that eavesdrops on the whole blinking planet. "In multiple ways, each of the countries involved is breaking its own laws, those of other countries, and international law," Washington journalist William Blum writes in "Rogue State," (Common Courage Press) noting that "the absence of court-issued warrants permitting surveillance of specific individuals is but one example" of ECHELON crimes. In Australia, Attorney General Robert McClelland has launched a probe to determine if WikiLeaks had broken any laws. In Congress, Senator Joseph Lieberman charged those responsible for the WikiLeaks disclosures have "blood on their hands," never mind that Lieberman is a strong advocate of the Middle East wars that have killed, by some accounts, more than a million souls. (Say it ain't so, Joe.)

In sum, it's apparently insufficient that the U.S. runs the greatest spy operation in history via 16 agencies that Walter Pincus of The Washington Post writes will cost taxpayers \$80 billion this year. Ms. Clinton, like her predecessor Condoleezza Rice, ordered her payrollers to become spies as well. "Fingerprints and photographs are collected as part of embassies' consular and visa operations, but it is harder to see how diplomats could justify obtaining DNA samples and iris scans," the Guardian said. No it's not. In the brave new world run by the American Master Race, foreign diplomats are supplicants, not equals, who can be subjected to any humiliation. And so, (surprise!) can the American people. Their bodies are now subject to X-raying and physical groping at airports. Their telephones, faxes, and E-mails are being read. Their bank accounts and credit cards are being monitored. Americans are being arrested and prosecuted for exercising their Constitutional right to protest at a Republican Convention or at a trade conference. Their taxes are being stolen big-time to bail out private bankers. Their children are being ordered to fight wars of aggression based on the kinds of lies WikiLeaks at least has the courage to reveal and Ms. Clinton seeks to conceal. In short, don't look to America for freedom any more. It is locked up in a Quantico brig with PFC Bradley Manning.

Sherwood Ross formerly reported for the Chicago Daily News and worked as a wire service columnist. To comment or contribute to his Anti-War News Service reach him at sherwoodross10@gmail.com

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Interpol Issues Wanted Notice For Julian Assange

By Jerome Taylor [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Obama Administration Seeks To Criminalize WikiLeaks

By Patrick Martin [article link](#) [article link](#)

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WikiLeaks and the End of U.S. 'Diplomacy'

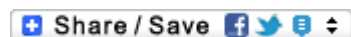
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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:04 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

[Bill Quigley: Why Wikileaks is Good for Democracy](#)

Why Wikileaks is Good for Democracy

by Bill Quigley [article link](#)

November 30, 2010 | CommonDreams

Information is the currency of democracy. --Thomas Jefferson.

Since 9-11, the US government, through Presidents Bush and Obama, has increasingly told the US public that "state secrets" will not be shared with citizens. Candidate Obama pledged to reduce the use of state secrets, but President Obama continued the Bush tradition. The Courts and Congress and international allies have gone meekly along with the escalating secrecy demands of the US Executive.

By labeling tens of millions of documents secret, the US government has created a huge vacuum of information.

But information is the lifeblood of democracy. Information about government contributes to a healthy democracy. Transparency and accountability are essential elements of good government. Likewise, “a lack of government transparency and accountability undermines democracy and gives rise to cynicism and mistrust,” according to a 2008 Harris survey commissioned by the Association of Government Accountants.

Into the secrecy vacuum stepped Private Bradley Manning, who, according to the Associated Press, was able to defeat “Pentagon security systems using little more than a Lady Gaga CD and a portable computer memory stick.”

Manning apparently sent the information to Wikileaks – a non profit media organization, which specializes in publishing leaked information. Wikileaks in turn shared the documents to other media around the world including the New York Times and published much of it on its website.

Despite criminal investigations by the US and other governments, it is not clear that media organizations like Wikileaks can be prosecuted in the US in light of First Amendment. Recall that the First Amendment says: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Outraged politicians are claiming that the release of government information is the criminal equivalent of terrorism and puts innocent people’s lives at risk. Many of those same politicians authorized the modern equivalent of carpet bombing of Baghdad and other Iraqi cities, the sacrifice of thousands of lives of soldiers and civilians, and drone assaults on civilian areas in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen. Their anger at a document dump, no matter how extensive, is more than a little suspect.

Everyone, including Wikileaks and the other media reporting the documents, hopes that no lives will be lost because of this. So far, that appears to be the case as McClatchey Newspapers reported November 28, 2010, that ‘US officials conceded that they have no evidence to date that the [prior] release of documents led to anyone’s death.’

The US has been going in the wrong direction for years by classifying millions of documents as secrets. Wikileaks and other media which report these so called secrets will embarrass people yes. Wikileaks and other media will make leaders uncomfortable yes. But embarrassment and discomfort are small prices to pay for a healthier democracy.

Wikileaks has the potential to make transparency and accountability more robust in the US. That is good for democracy.

Bill Quigley is Legal Director at the [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) and a law professor at Loyola University New Orleans. He is a Katrina survivor and has been active in human rights in Haiti for years with the [Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti](#). Quigley77@gmail.com

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The New York Times Again Censoring WikiLeaks

By Stephen Lendman [article link](#)

November 30, 2010 | Countercurrents

Wikileaks And The New Global Order

By Jonathan Cook [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 30, 2010 | Countercurrents | Global Research

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Deceits, Plots, Insults: America Laid Bare

Diplomatic communiqués released by Wikileaks shine unprecedented light on the US and how it sees the world

By Jerome Taylor, Cahal Milmo and David Usborne, US Editor [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 29, 2010 | The Independent/UK | ICH

The Independent/UK [home page](#)

Information Clearing House [home page](#)

Democracy NOW!

The War And Peace Report

November 30, 2010

David Leigh, Investigations Executive Editor at the Guardian (UK)

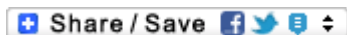
["We Have Not Seen Anything Yet": Guardian Editor Says Most Startling WikiLeaks Cables Still To Be Released](#)

"In the coming days, we are going to see some quite startling disclosures about Russia, the nature of the Russian state, and about bribery and corruption in other countries, particularly in Central Asia," says Investigations Executive Editor David Leigh at the Guardian, one of the three newspapers given advanced access to the secret U.S. embassy cables by the whistleblower website, WikiLeaks. "We will see a wrath of disclosures about pretty terrible things going on around the world." Leigh reviews the major WikiLeaks revelations so far, explains how the 250,000 files were downloaded and given to the newspaper on a thumb drive, and confirms the Guardian gave the files to the New York Times. Additional cables will be disclosed throughout the week.

[Noam Chomsky: WikiLeaks Cables Reveal "Profound Hatred for Democracy on the Part of Our Political Leadership"](#)

In a national broadcast exclusive interview, we speak with world-renowned political dissident and linguist Noam Chomsky about the release of more than 250,000 secret U.S. State Department cables by WikiLeaks. In 1971, Chomsky helped government whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg release the Pentagon Papers, a top-secret internal U.S. account of the Vietnam War. Commenting on the revelations that several Arab leaders are urging the United States to attack Iran, Chomsky says, "latest polls show] Arab opinion holds that the major threat in the region is Israel, that's 80 percent; the second threat is the United States, that's 77 percent. Iran is listed as a threat by 10 percent," Chomsky says. "This may not be reported in the newspapers, but it's certainly familiar to the Israeli and U.S. governments and the ambassadors. What this reveals is the profound hatred for democracy on the part of our political leadership."

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:34 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Monday, November 29, 2010

[Norman Solomon: WikiLeaks: Demystifying "Diplomacy"](#)

WikiLeaks: Demystifying "Diplomacy"

by Norman Solomon [article link](#)

November 29, 2010 | CommonDreams

Compared to the kind of secret cables that WikiLeaks has just shared with the world, everyday public statements from government officials are exercises in make-believe.

In a democracy, people have a right to know what their government is actually doing. In a pseudo-democracy, a bunch of fairy tales from high places will do the trick.

Diplomatic facades routinely masquerade as realities. But sometimes the mask slips -- for all the world to see -- and that's what just happened with the humongous leak of State Department cables.

"Every government is run by liars," independent journalist I.F. Stone observed, "and nothing they say should be believed." The extent and gravity of the lying varies from one government to another -- but no pronouncements from world capitals should be taken on faith.

By its own account, the U.S. government has been at war for more than nine years now and there's no end in sight. Like the Pentagon, the State Department is serving the overall priorities of the warfare state. The nation's military and diplomacy are moving parts of the same vast war machinery.

Such a contraption requires a muscular bodyguard of partial truths, deceptions and outright lies. With the USA's ongoing war efforts at full throttle, the contradictions between public rationales and hidden goals -- or between lofty rhetoric and grisly human consequences -- cannot stand the light of day.

Details of Washington's transactional alliances with murderous dictators, corrupt tyrants, warlords and drug traffickers are among its most closely guarded quasi-secrets. Most media accounts can be blown off by officialdom, but smoking-gun diplomatic cables are harder to ignore.

With its massive and unending reliance on military force -- with a result of more and more carnage, leaving behind immense grief and rage in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere -- the U.S. government has colossal gaps to bridge between its public-relations storylines and its war-making realities.

The same government that devotes tremendous resources to inflicting military violence abroad must tout its humane bona fides and laudable priorities to the folks back home. But that essential PR task becomes more difficult when official documents to the contrary keep leaking.

No government wants to face documentation of actual policies, goals and priorities that directly contradict its public claims of virtue. In societies with democratic freedoms, the governments that have the most to fear from such disclosures are the ones that have been doing the most lying to their own people.

The recent mega-leaks are especially jarring because of the extreme contrasts between the U.S. government's public pretenses and real-life actions. But the standard official response is to blame the leaking messengers.

"We condemn in the strongest terms the unauthorized disclosure of classified documents and sensitive national security information," the White House said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Sen. Joseph Lieberman denounced "an outrageous, reckless and despicable action that will undermine the ability of our government and our partners to keep our people safe and to work together to defend our vital interests." For good measure, he twittered: "WikiLeaks' deliberate disclosure of these diplomatic cables is nothing less than an attack on our national security."

But what kind of "national security" can be built on duplicity from a government that is discredited and refuted by its own documents?

Norman Solomon is a journalist, historian, and progressive activist. His book "[War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death](#)" has been adapted into a documentary film of the same name. His most recent book is "[Made Love, Got War](#)." He is a national co-chair of the [Healthcare NOT Warfare](#) campaign. In California, he is co-chair of the Commission on a [Green New Deal](#) for the North Bay.

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New WikiLeaks Documents Expose US Foreign Policy Conspiracies

by David Walsh [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 29,, 2010 | WSWS | Global Research

World Socialist Web Site (WSWS) [home page](#)

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:24 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

Stephen Lendman: Imperial America's End Time

Imperial America's End Time

By Stephen Lendman [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 29,, 2010 | Stephen Lendman | Countercurrents | OpEdNews

Noted analysts on both left and right see America's empire in decline. In his 2009 book, "Global Depression and Regional Wars," James Petras said:

"All the idols of capitalism over the past three decades have crashed. The assumptions and presumptions, paradigms and prognosis of indefinite progress under liberal free market capitalism have been tested and have failed. We are living the end of an entire epoch (and are bearing witness to) the collapse of the US and world financial system," and with it America's empire.

On August 16, Paul Craig Roberts headlined his article, "The Ecstasy of Empire: How Close Is America's Demise," saying:

America's profligacy "is running out of time...." Yet "2010 has been wasted in hype about a non-existent recovery." Government-manipulated reality masks the internal rot. Wall Street handouts and imperial wars are bankrupting the country.

"US military spending reflects the unaffordable and unattainable crazed neoconservative goal of US empire and world hegemony....If the wars are not immediately stopped and the jobs (not) brought back to America, the US is relegated to the trash bin of history....Without a revolution, Americans are history." Indeed so.

In his March 18, 2008 article headlined, "The Collapse of America Power," Roberts said:

America thinks it owns the world. In fact, it "owes the world. The US 'superpower' cannot even finance its own domestic operations, much less its gratuitous wars" except through mounting debt that can't be repaid, and the more it mounts, the greater the eventual crash, working Americans to bear the burden.

In his November 16 article headlined, "Ruling on Behalf of Wall Street's 'Super Rich:' The Financial End Time has Arrived," Michael Hudson said:

"The financial End Time has arrived....(t)hanks largely to the \$13 trillion Wall Street bailout - while keeping the debt overhead in place for America's 'bottom 98%' - this happy 2% of the population now receives an estimated three quarters (75%) of the returns to wealth (interest, dividends, rent and capital gains). This is nearly double what it received a generation ago. The rest of the population is being squeezed, and foreclosures are rising."

The economy is being destroyed to favor Wall Street and Pentagon militarists. Obama perpetuates this madness. "The Worst of Obama: He's Carving the Middle Class into Sausage Filler as a Super-Meal for the Rich," and trashing America in the process.

A recent article remembered Chalmers Johnson, best known for calling America's global wars and imperialism a "suicide option" unless reversed. Access it through the following link: [article link](#)

Naming us our own enemy, he called our policies "arrogant and misguided," America's condition dire, and it's "too late for mere scattered reforms." We can choose - democracy to survive or perish under current policies. He said America is plagued by the same dynamic that doomed past empires unwilling to change, what he called:

"isolation, overstretch, the uniting of local and global forces opposed to imperialism, and in the end bankruptcy," combined with authoritarian rule and loss of personal freedom. In other words, tyranny and ruin, his book "Nemesis" presenting:

"historical, political, economic, and philosophical evidence of where our current behavior is likely to lead. Specifically, I believe that to maintain our empire abroad requires resources and commitments that will inevitably undercut our domestic democracy and in the end produce a military dictatorship or its civilian equivalent."

"The founders of our nation understood this well and tried to create a form of government - a republic - that would prevent this from occurring. But the combination of huge standing armies, almost continuous wars, military Keynesianism, and ruinous military expenses have destroyed our republican structure in favor of an imperial presidency. We are on the cusp of losing our democracy for the sake of keeping our empire." Eventually, however, we'll keep neither.

In a July 30 article, titled "Three Good Reasons to Liquidate Our Empire," Johnson cited:

- (1) Postwar expansionism is no longer affordable;
- (2) We're losing the Afghan War and pursuing it is bankrupting us; and
- (3) Our shameful "empire of bases" must end; close them down, at least most, ideally all, and also sharply cut our standing army.

His main message: "we must give up our inappropriate reliance on military force as the chief means of attempting to achieve foreign policy objectives." Few empires ever did it voluntarily. Britain did, choosing democracy. The Soviets didn't and fell.

A Grim Pentagon Afghan War Assessment

In its most recent semiannual report, released late November, titled, "Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," Pentagon commanders were worried, suggesting that despite 100,000 US forces and 50,000 others (double the force since 2008), conditions are no better, saying;

"Progress across the country remains uneven, with modest gains in security, governance and development in operational priority areas." Progress overall has been "slow and incremental....key terrain....relatively unchanged."

Notably, however, violence and Afghan deaths have sharply risen as a result of a 300% increase in armed clashes since 2007, and a 70% rise over 2009. Despite the force buildup, "The insurgency has proven resilient with sustained logistics capacity and command and control."

Afghans also acknowledge that security is worse than ever. Moreover, "insurgent safe havens" in Pakistan and Iran threaten to widen the war further. In fact, "(e)fforts to reduce insurgent capacity....have not produced measurable results" despite heightened drone and other attacks.

In addition, out-of-control corruption exacerbates the problem, the report calling it "consistent with the view that (it's) preventing the Afghan government from connecting with the people and remains a key reason for Afghans supporting the insurgency."

Nonetheless, Washington is staying the course, shifting its exit strategy from fixed to transition, the report calling the "US commitment to Afghanistan....continuing, enduring, and long-lasting." In other words, continuity, not winning or losing matters, assuring hundreds of billions more dollars endlessly spent. And not just in Afghanistan/Pakistan.

Another Gloomy War Analysis

On October 14, Anthony Cordesman of the conservative Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) issued a report titled, "Grand Strategy in the Afghan, Pakistan, and Iraq Wars: The End State Fallacy," saying;

"Grand strategy is not an American strength....Iraq is already a case in point. We have not yet achieved any meaningful form of positive strategic result (from over seven and a half years of war), and may end in a major grand strategic defeat."

Conflict continues. Obama's end of combat mission was bogus. Permanent occupation is planned. Iraq can't contain or counter Iran. There's no stable or effective government or political system. Iran's influence in the country may rival or surpass our own. Our pursuit of an "end state fallacy" may lose the war "in grand strategic terms." In other ways, it's already lost. Violence plagues the country daily, little reported in America's media.

An announced end of 2011 exit is planned. Expect that goal to change, while at the same time, Congress shows less willingness to appropriate limitless funding. "We may (also) lose the Iraq War for other reasons - its unstable politics, tenuous security, and Iran's dominance of future Shiite governments." So far, "we have won exactly nothing." A tactical victory looks increasingly pyrrhic.

Moreover, Washington "seems to be in a state of partial denial in dealing with the need for a long term...strategic commitment to the region." Alternatives to strategically failing in Iraq may be found, but it will be hard to "incredibly costly to compensate for (overall) failure in the Gulf."

Afghan/Pak (Afghanistan and Pakistan), however, is "radically different," reflecting a "very uncertain strategic posture." America's interests are "limited" compared to the Gulf. China and Russia are powerful rivals with strategic interests of their own.

What Afghan/Pak/Iraq have in common is there's "no credible end state to the fighting....that can give the US a credible grand strategic victory or stable outcome." Like Iraq and the Gulf, it will be "at least a decade" before stable governments, economies and security structures are possible. Even then, they're unlikely.

Afghanistan's outlook is even more tenuous than Iraq's. Winning in any form requires propping up and financing its government for years, maybe always. The country's had decades of war and instability. Its economy ranks "201st" in terms of per capita income, and poverty and overall need levels are extraordinarily high. At best, it will be well over a decade before Afghanistan makes real progress with sustained US help. Increasingly, however, it looks more like an unwinnable black hole, draining America's resources.

Pakistan complicates matters. Dealing with "Al Qa'ida and the Taliban in the FATA-Baluchistan areas are only the tip of the iceberg." Its government is corrupt and incompetent. Its military and intelligence structure have "strong Islamist elements." Its economy and social structure are crippled and semi-feudal. "Its security is shaped by the threat from India, growing internal religious tensions, and additional problems with Deobandi extremists, and hostile movements in Baluchistan and the Sind."

Pakistan is better off than Afghanistan, but it's also more dependent on US aid. It doesn't signal failure, but it does mean major challenges for the foreseeable future. As with Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington "can only influence - not shape - (its) future." Its present government may not survive. It's unclear whether any amount of US aid will work. It's unknown if America will serve Pakistan's interests if it keeps fighting. It's also uncertain whether its government will "abandon its efforts to manipulate Afghanistan (and) use it against India." It's unclear as well whether its military is willing to fight.

Moreover, its government may fall, and its military only does enough to maintain US aid as long as Pentagon forces remain in the area. Resolving its future and stability will be uncertain until "at least 2020." Maybe much longer or never.

Yet the Obama administration "seems to deliberately avoid projecting the need for a lasting commitment to either Afghanistan (or) Pakistan, and providing anything approaching an estimate of the cost of sustaining the war and dealing

with its aftermath." Increasingly, its plan appears ad hoc, shifting commanders instead of addressing policy failures and changing them. Larger force levels and more violence and killing aren't solutions. So far, they've made conditions worse, not better.

Also consider the costs, already unsustainable, with no end of spending in sight. Eventually, Congress will tire of funding them, especially with no tangible successes.

"The US and its allies are pursuing a largely mythical Afghan development plan which lacks core credibility in peacetime, much less in war. There is no development plan for Pakistan. The US is effectively paying an open ended mix of bribes to a country whose economy is now crippled by a catastrophic flood, and whose main security interest is India, not the war the US wants it to fight."

Washington has failed in its planning and execution efforts. However, even if correctly done, the prospects for winning and withdrawing would be "negligible. The challenges are simply too great, and the timelines for credible change are too long....The US cannot afford to allow this situation to continue."

The Iraq/Afghan/Pak wars "raise grand strategic questions about what the US could have accomplished (with a fraction of the money devoted to) build(ing) regional allies" and other productive undertakings. Choosing open-ended wars "for the wrong reasons....is not an experience we should repeat." Moreover, cutting losses and getting out of today's mess is essential, putting greater emphasis on diplomacy than warmaking. "After what soon will be ten years of fighting, it is time we not only learned this, but acted on the lesson."

A Final Comment

America's Iraq/Afghan/Pak wars are unwinnable, highlighted in an earlier Afghanistan article, accessed through the following link: [article link](#)

No matter. America wages permanent wars for an unwinnable peace. Enemies are fabricated as justification. War profiteers benefit. The public is duped and betrayed. Two earlier articles explained, accessed through the following links: [article link](#) [article link](#)

Moreover, since WW II, all US wars have been illegal, what neither the Pentagon nor CSIS reports addressed. All international laws and treaties, including the UN Charter, automatically become US law under the Constitution's Supremacy Clause, Article VI, Clause 2.

Moreover, the Charter's Chapter VII empowers the Security Council alone to determine the existence of threats to peace, breaching it, or committing an act of aggression, as well as if military or other action is necessary to restore international peace and stability. It lets nations use force solely under two conditions:

-- by Security Council authorization; or

-- under Article 51 that permits the "right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member....until the Security Council has taken measures to maintain international peace and security."

In addition, both houses of Congress, not the president, have exclusive power to declare war under the Constitution's Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 - the war powers clause. Nonetheless, that procedure was followed only five times in US history, last used on December 8, 1941 after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

In 1973, Congress addressed the issue, passing the War Powers Resolution. It requires the president to get congressional authorization for war or a resolution passed within 60 days of initiating hostilities. Its Section 4(a)(3) also states:

"In the absence of a declaration of war, in any case in which the United States Armed Forces are introduced.... (3) in numbers which substantially enlarge the United States Armed Forces equipped for combat already located in a foreign

nation; the president shall submit within 48 hours to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and to the President pro tempore of the Senate a report, setting forth" necessitating circumstances, a request for "constitutional and legislative authority," and the "estimated scope and duration of the hostilities involved."

In 1991, Congress gave GHW Bush authorization to attack Iraq (the Gulf War). It didn't authorize GW Bush in 2001 or 2003. Yet he went to war anyway, violating international and US laws. As a result, the Iraq/Afghan/Pak wars are illegal. The president, supportive congressional members, other culpable officials, and military high command are war criminals.

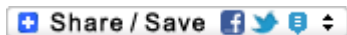
Those issues are out of sight and mind in the Pentagon and CSIS reports, yet they're more important than any others, and may only be belatedly addressed when America's end time arrives.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. Also visit his [blog site](#) and listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the [Progressive Radio News Hour](#) on the [Progressive Radio Network](#) Thursdays at 10AM US Central time and Saturdays and Sundays at noon. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:12 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

Sunday, November 28, 2010

[Brian Willson: War and Its Victims](#)

The Trauma of Civilization for Our Species: War and Its Victims

by Brian Willson [article link](#)

August 1, 2007 | S. Brian Willson

According to the U.S. foreign policy oversight organization, [Just Foreign Policy](#), the number of Iraqi deaths due to the U.S. invasion and continuing occupation now exceeds **one million**. It is more than ten times greater than most estimates used in the U.S. media.

This estimate is based primarily on the only valid scientific study conducted of violent Iraqi deaths caused by the U.S. aggression. In the July 2006 issue, an article in the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*, estimated that over 600,000 Iraqis had been killed up to that time. But, of course the killing has continued at a sickening pace, and by using the Iraq Body Count as a guide for the rate of increase since July 2006, the new figure has gone beyond a million. [The study survey was done by Iraqi physicians and overseen by epidemiologists at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health. The findings were published online October 11, 2006 by the British medical journal The Lancet].

Since the U.S.-initiated war started on March 19, 2003, the number of Iraqi deaths average 18,868 per month, or about **629 per day!**

Let us compare this figure with the U.S. war and occupation of Southeast Asia from March 8, 1965, the date the U.S. Marines landed at DaNang, through January 27, 1973, the date of the ceasefire (though there were some casualties after this date). It is generally believed now that more than 5 million Southeast Asians were killed due to the U.S. aggression. In the 94 months plus 19 days of that inclusive period, March 8, 1965 through January 27, 1973, we find **1,740** Asians killed *per day*, nearly 3 times the already staggering Iraqi figure!

Now let us compare the death rate for the 37-month Korean War, where it is now estimated that another 5 million Asians were killed. During this conflict, we discover that **4,505** Koreans and Chinese were killed, *every day*-more than two-and-a-half times the daily figure for Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos.

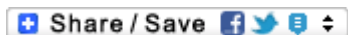
One more comparison is in order. There is a general consensus that somewhere in the vicinity of 50 to 55 million people were killed during World War II. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945, Germany already having been defeated in May 1945. If we take the figure of 52,500,000 dead during the war, and use the number of war days as 2,173, then we are staggered with **24,160** deaths *per day* over a nearly six-year period! This figure is well over five times the daily deaths from Korea. And this does not include all post-1945 radiation victims from the dropping of the enriched uranium and plutonium bombs on August 6 and 9.

Historians estimate 14,500 *major wars* have occurred over the past 5,500 years with the advent of civilization, claiming the lives of at least 3.5 billion people. During the 20th Century about 125 million people were killed by actions of governments. Since the end of World War II, virtually all wars have been conducted in what have been described as "Third World" nations, with Iraq now considered an exception. The conservative English war historian John Keegan has stated that 50 million people have been killed by war since the so-called "First World" peace began in 1945 through the mid-1990s.

War emerged with the advent of civilization. Civilization has been severely traumatic for the human condition for more than 300 generations. It has been sustained by massive obedience to its vertical authority structures, whether described as inherited kingdoms, dictatorial despots, or elected democratic oligarchs. Part of that obedience has required subservience of labor for production and military roles to assure increased profits— primarily for the benefit of those positioned in the narrow portion of the apex of the vertical power structures.

We in so-called democratic societies seem to actually believe that our political structures represent the people, rather than power. It is time to drop that belief such that we might be enabled to become disobedient to power. Instead, we can choose to become personally responsible with all our relationships as they manifest in the communities where we live. As we revolt from obedience we may learn that we are totally capable of remaking ourselves into an earth community rather than a bunch of plundering consumers. Our lives, and the life of an inhabitable planet, depends on it, beginning right where we live. Let us globalize liberation in each of our communities. Why not make a leap into local self-reliant community where democracy is direct, i.e., radical. This is a fantastic opportunity for all of us to become awake and vital. Or, we can choose business as usual, and stumble off the cliff to a terrifying death below-omnicide.

S. Brian Willson [Articles](#) Root & Structural Causes of War
S. Brian Willson [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [4:00 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Brian Willson: Breaking Our Addiction to War](#)

Breaking Our Addiction to War

by Brian Willson [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 28, 2010 | S. Brian Willson January 25, 2010 | Global Research

I am sick of being anti-war. Are wars inevitable? War crimes? If we really don't want wars, it behooves us to get serious about understanding their causes, and choose to radically address them. Otherwise, what's the point? Feeling a "rush" with like-minded folks at political actions only perpetuates our addiction to anti-war rallies, which do nothing to stop wars from occurring.

The inarticulate presidency of George Bush II successfully unmasked the US empire for everyone to see in its gruesome glory – laying bare all the lies, sordid details, and egregious consequences of unfettered greed. Then the hopium associated with Obama's election served as a soothing tranquilizer, quieting the movement, at least for a time. Yet, no matter who is in

power, wars continue *ad nauseum*. To learn why we must examine the vertical/hierarchical, patriarchal political-economic system to which we humans have adapted over millennia.

First, let's look at US history. The record reveals a chronic, depressing pattern of war making – 550 direct military interventions since 1799 in more than 100 countries. More than 300 of these have occurred since World War II, including bombing of 28 countries. In addition, the US has conducted thousands of covert interventions, mostly in “Third World” countries.

The longer view: Since the advent of “civilization” around 3500 BC (55 centuries ago), there have been 14,600 recorded “decisive wars,” not counting thousands of smaller, “indecisive” ones, according to the Norwegian Academy of Sciences. This coincides with development of writing and emergence of patriarchal, hierarchical kingdoms, most of which later became empires. The rulers of these kingdoms gained power by manipulating surplus that had grown out of the agricultural revolution. Another coincidence with the advent of civilization is a notable increase in findings of human remains for which the cause of death has been attributed to warfare injuries. Archaeologists have found little if any evidence of systemic warfare prior to this time.

Since 1500 AD, war scholar Quincy Wright documents 3,000 recorded “battles” which involved casualties of at least 1,000 in land battles, and 500 in naval ones, with an additional quarter million “hostile encounters.” The US Army alone has been engaged in over 9,000 “battles and skirmishes” between 1775-1900, most against Native Americans, with the US Navy engaged in over 1,100 encounters in addition.

Efforts to prevent wars are also well established. Historical sociologist Jacques Novicow documented more than 8,000 treaties for peace between 1,500 BC and 1860 AD.

Modern efforts to impose accountability for war behavior include the Hague and Geneva Conventions, the United Nations Charter, and the Nuremberg Principles. The 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact renounced war altogether. Since the 1950s, the US Army Field Manual adopted provisions of international law, absolutely prohibiting targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. It has done little, if anything, to retard murder of civilians.

Attempting to understand this chronic pattern of human carnage, scholars such as Lewis Mumford, Thomas Berry, Marija Gimbutus, Riane Eisler, and James Hillman chronicle the record of more than five millennia of the four patriarchal establishments – classical empires, ecclesiastical institutions, nation-states, and modern corporations. All four can be described as male-dominated, vertical hierarchies dependent for their functioning on strict obedience from their population base.

“Civilization” is marked by a dramatic shift from long-standing decentralized, horizontal, matriarchal societies, to centralized, vertical/class-oriented, patriarchal societies, in which obedience to a King was required, and slave labor utilized to construct massive projects like tombs, irrigation and grain storage systems. Class and stratification ripped people from their historical roots as autonomous beings living in small cooperative tribal groups. This separation of people from their intimate connections with the earth produced deep insecurity, anxiety and fear in the psyche, and ecopsychologists such as Chellis Glendinning and Theodore Roszak suggest that such fragmentation created a traumatic primordial breach. Being forced to live and work in a class system generally leads to a feeling of lack of self worth. People will avoid this shame at any cost, often by adopting “defense mechanism” such as projecting demonization onto others “below,” and/or deference of authentic autonomous freedoms to belief in authority structures and adoption of their accompanying mythologies and ideologies.

For 300 generations civilization has required obedience. This has become a cultural habit enabling each of us to successfully adapt to our non-Indigenous culture. Observers such as Etienne De La Boetie have discovered that virtually all vertical power quickly becomes ego-tyrannical, inherent in concentration of political, social and economic power, whether achieved through elections (such as the USA), force of arms, or inheritance. Method of rule is essentially the same – achieving mass consent through either fear or propaganda/myth. Barbara Tuchman describes the historical folly of ego-maniacs at war in her 1984 book, [The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam](#).

In essence, by being conditioned to obey the laws and mores of modern society dictated and shaped by vertical political-economic systems, we have been living contrary to our authentic nature as cooperative beings capable of self-governance in small communities without authority from above. In addition, in the West, with but 20 percent of the world's population, we have materially benefited from 500 years of colonial exploitation at the expense of the remaining 80 percent. This is not only immoral, it is ecologically unsustainable. In the US, with but 4.6 percent of the world's population, our insatiable consumption devours more than 30 percent of the globe's resources. Habits of obedience to our system have historically been reinforced by our personal addiction to consumer goods, fed by the myth that our material well-being derives from our "exceptionalism" as US Americans. Our allegiance to this myth and our addiction to its benefits are what enable those dreadful wars – these are nothing more than imperial projects to assure, at gunpoint, continuation of our American Way Of Life, not to mention endless profits for the "emperor" and his entourage.

In summary, we are addicted to war because we are addicted to a materialist way of life, which requires obedience to an infrastructure of imperialism that enables business as usual. That it is totally unsustainable is only now being realized.

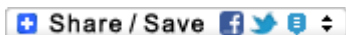
The prescription: Re-discover the eco-consciousness that already resides in our visceral genetic memory outside our brains. Choosing to live with less stuff in locally sufficient, food producing and simple tool making/artisan cultures can be joyful, and pockets of such revivalist cultures are cropping up in many places as people strive to re-establish their local autonomy. We are coming full circle – those we exterminated because we deemed them "savage," were in fact authentic. We are the savages and now must turn to the authentics to help in our healing.

S. Brian Willson [Articles](#) Envisioning Nonviolent Revolutionary Alternatives

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Sunday, November 28, 2010

[Robert Fisk: Oceans of Blood and Profits for the Mongers of War](#)

Oceans of Blood and Profits for the Mongers of War

by Robert Fisk [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 28, 2010 | The Independent/UK | CommonDreams

Since there are now three conflicts in the greater Middle East; Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel/"Palestine" and maybe another Lebanese war in the offing, it might be a good idea to take a look at the cost of war.

Not the human cost - 80 lives a day in Iraq, unknown numbers in Afghanistan, one a day in Israel/"Palestine" (for now) - but the financial one. I'm still obsessed by the Saudi claim for its money back after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990. Hadn't Saudi Arabia, King Fahd reminded Saddam, financed his eight-year war against Iran to the tune of

\$25,734,469,885.80? For the custodian of the two holy places, Mecca and Medina, to have shelled out \$25bn for Saddam to slaughter his fellow Muslims was pretty generous - although asking for that extra 80 cents was surely a bit greedy.

But then again, talking of rapacity, the Arabs spent \$84bn underwriting the Anglo-American operation against Saddam in 1990-91 - three times what Fahd gave to Saddam for the Iran war - and the Saudi share alone came to \$27.5bn. In all, the Arabs sustained a loss of \$620bn because of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait - almost all of which was paid over to the United States and its allies. Washington was complaining in August 1991 that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait still owed \$7.5bn. Western wars in the Middle East, it seemed, could be fought for profit as well as victory. Maybe Iraq could have brought us more treasure if it hadn't ended in disaster. At least it would help to have paid for America's constant infusion of cash to Israel's disastrous wars.

According to Israeli historian Illan Pappé, since 1949, the US has passed to Israel more than \$100bn in grants and \$10bn in special loans - more than Washington hands out to North Africa, South America and the Caribbean. Over the past 20 years, \$5.5bn has been given to Israel for military purchases. But for sheer self-abuse, it's necessary to read of the Midas-like losses in the entire Middle East since just 1991 - an estimated \$12,000,000,000,000. Yup, that's a cool \$12trn and, if you don't believe me, take a look at an unassuming little booklet that the "Strategic Fortnight Group" published not long ago. Its statistic caught a few headlines, but was then largely forgotten, perhaps because it was published in faraway Mumbai rather than by some preposterous American "tink-thank" (as I call them). But it was funded by, among others, the Norwegian and Swiss foreign ministries. And the Indians are pretty smart about money, as we know as we wait in fear of its new super-economy.

So since there may soon be a new Israel-Hizbollah war, let's get an idea of the astronomical costs of all those F-16s, missiles, "bunker-busters", Iranian-made rockets, smashed Lebanese factories, villages, towns, bridges, power stations, oil terminals - we will not soil ourselves with Lebanon's 1,300 pathetic dead or Israel's 130 pathetic dead in the 2006 war for these are mere mortals - not to mention the losses in tourism and trade to both sides. Total losses for Lebanon in 2006 came to an estimated \$3.6bn, for Israel \$1.6bn - so Israel won hands down in terms of money, even if its rabble of an army screwed everything up on the ground. But among those who paid for this were American taxpayers (funding the Israelis) and European taxpayers, Arab potentates and the crackpot of Iran (funding Lebanon). So the American taxpayer destroys what the European taxpayer rebuilds. It's the same in Gaza; Washington funds the weapons to blow up EU-funded projects and the EU rebuilds them in time for them to be destroyed again. But boy oh boy, in the Lebanese war, US arms manufacturers make a packet - and so, to a lesser extent do the Iranian and Chinese missile dealers.

Let's break down the 2006 Lebanon war figures. Bridges and roads: \$450m. Utilities: \$419m. Housing: \$2bn. But military "institutions": a paltry \$16m. Hizbollah apparently spent \$300m. Overall, rebuilding came to \$319m, infrastructure repairs to \$454m, oil spill costs to \$175m. Just for sadistic fun, you can add forest fires (\$4.6m), displaced civilians (\$52m) and Beirut airport (\$170m). But the biggest cost of all? Tourism, at \$3-4bn. Now Israel. Tourism lost \$1.4 bn, "government and emergency services" \$460n, businesses \$1.4bn, compensation paid out \$335.4m, forest fires \$18m. What have the Israeli army and Hizbollah got against forests? In all, the Israeli losses amounted to 1.5 per cent of GDP, the Lebanese 8 per cent of GDP.

And just look at the Middle East "arms race" - the jockeys being the arms manufacturers, the punters being the countries of the region and, of course, their "huddled masses". Saudi Arabia, as the Mumbai report said, leaps in a decade between 1996 and 2006 from \$18bn to \$30bn a year - it's just negotiating a \$60bn deal with the US - and Iran from \$3bn to \$10bn. Israel has gone from \$8bn to \$12bn. In fact, there's an interesting correlation between Israel's state-of-the-art democratically minded missile-firings between 2000 and 2007 - 34,050 - and Hamas's evil, terrorist-inspired missile firings: a rather piffling 2,333.

There's a host of other goodies in this appalling list of financial and social horrors. On 11 September 2001, just 16 people were on America's "no-fly" list; by December, it was 594. By August 2008, it had reached an astonishing 100,000. At present rate, the US "terrorist watch list" will reach two million souls in two years' time. Since 1974, UN peacekeepers on the Golan Heights have cost \$47.86m while the UN has forked out \$680.93m for its forces in southern Lebanon since 1978.

So coming soon to a war near you; oceans of blood, bodies torn to shreds, of course. But bring your credit card. Or a cheque book. It's big business. And there may be profits.

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Robert Fisk is Middle East correspondent for The Independent newspaper. He is the author of many books on the region, including [The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:20 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Tom Turnipseed: The Rich Get Rich and the Poor Get Poorer

The Rich Get Rich and the Poor Get Poorer

Hunger and Homelessness in America

by Tom Turnipseed [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 28, 2010 | Two Seeds on a Blog | CommonDreams

"There's nothing surer; *the rich* get *rich* and the poor get poorer," was a slogan of the roaring 20s. The famous phrase was adapted from "Ain't We Got Fun," a popular song recorded in 1921. So what's new in America in the first decade of the 2000s?

Nothing! America's top 72 wage earners averaged 84 million dollars each in income last year, according to Social Security Administration data. The richest 1 percent of us earned 24 % of the nation's total income, the highest since 1928, just before the Great Depression. On the other hand, 14.3 % were living in poverty in 2009, according to the U. S Census Bureau. 50 million people from 17.4 million families are so poor they couldn't buy sufficient food last year. About one million children from more than a third of these households missed meals regularly according to a recent study by the Department of Agriculture. At dinner, families gather to share together. But for the children, dinner time can be the cruelest part of the day. Almost 1 in 4 of them doesn't know when they will have their next meal.

Because there is a high turnover and many homeless people stay hidden, homeless and hunger counts are only estimates. The Department of Housing and Urban Development reported a count of 643,067 homeless persons nationwide on a single night in January 2008. 1.6 million used emergency shelters or transitional housing during 2007/2008, suggesting that 1 in every 50 persons in the US used the shelter system at some point. 170,000 families lived in homeless shelters. With home foreclosures at record highs and continuing unemployment, homelessness is increasing.

Republicans in the U.S. House have blocked a bill that would have extended jobless benefits for the long-term unemployed beyond the holiday season. About 2 million people will lose their benefits if they are not extended, according to the National Employment Law Project. The blocked benefits would save the jobless from hunger and homelessness during the most severe recession since the 1930s and boost spending in the economy that will generate more jobs. Long-term unemployed workers are likely to spend their benefits right away on rent, food and other necessities, and create jobs in our economy. The Congressional Budget office estimates the "multiplier" effect of spending \$65 billion on unemployment insurance extensions will increase gross domestic product \$104.7 billion which translates into 488,000 payroll jobs.

The plutocrats controlling our government with campaign contributions and slick lobbyists oppose extending benefits to unemployed people. They fight to keep their unjust tax cuts and sit on the billions in bailout cash they received that we were told would save the economy and create jobs for poor and unemployed people. U. S. companies reported after-tax profits of \$1.22 trillion last quarter, the highest on record dating back to 1947, according to the Department of Commerce.

When will some of their government bailout welfare for the rich trickle down to poor and working people?

My wife, Judy and I are sponsors of an organization called Homeless Helping Homeless and volunteer at the local winter shelter. And, along with about 35 other people from diverse backgrounds, we have fed an average of 150 mostly homeless and hungry people every Sunday afternoon for the past 7 years at Finlay Park in downtown Columbia, South Carolina. . Each server brings a dish or two--turnip greens, mac and cheese, fresh fruit, banana pudding. Pastries are donated by local super markets. Our picnic provides a nutritious and tasty meal for the homeless and many of the servers. We are known as [Food Not Bombs](#), a national organization that encourages feeding hungry people rather than supporting military madness.

Our a-frame sign, set up near the entrance to our picnic, has a famous quote from a speech by former General and President Dwight Eisenhower that describes the military industrial complex:

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children."

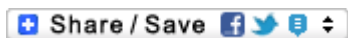
The U.S. defense budget is \$720 billion, which includes the Pentagon base budget, Department of Energy nuclear weapons activities and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. We far outstrip the rest of the world in defense spending, surpassing the next closest country by more than eight times. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports that the U.S. military budget accounts for 43% of the world's total military spending.

If we heed the words of Eisenhower and stop the madness we call war, if we require the wealthiest to pay their fair share, then perhaps we can end hunger and homelessness in America. There will be food, not bombs, and we will no longer destroy the hopes of our children.

Tom Turnipseed is an attorney, writer and peace activist in Columbia, SC. His blog is [Two Seeds on a Blog](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:03 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Saturday, November 27, 2010

[Michael Payne: America Is Fast Becoming Its Own Worst Enemy](#)

America Is Fast Becoming Its Own Worst Enemy

By Michael Payne [article link](#)

November 27, 2010 | OpEdNews

As the legendary cartoon character Pogo once said, "We have met the enemy and he is us." America apparently has masochistic tendencies, i.e., the process of turning one's destructive tendencies inward or upon oneself. The actions being taken by our government, coupled with the inactions of the American people to challenge them, are taking this nation down a dark and dangerous road. We are, in effect, becoming our own worst enemy.

America can be likened to a great athlete who is fast, powerful, perfectly conditioned with an unlimited potential. His future greatness is assured. This athlete is given mega-million dollar contracts, he has fans everywhere and a fabulous lifestyle; he has everything, not a worry in the world but then things start to change.

He reduces his conditioning regimen, he likes the night life, the girls, fast cars and gambling; he drinks too much, gets involved with the wrong crowd and enters the drug scene. He begins to perform badly, he skips, or is late, to practices, and he gets benched; eventually, the team cuts him. He no longer can perform, no one will sign him; he is done. He has ruined a fantastic opportunity and has, by his own actions, has self-destructed.

That athlete and America have a lot in common. This once was a very strong nation, rich in natural resources, a thriving, growing economy, a solid manufacturing sector and a population in which creativity and innovation flourished; a country on the rise with the wind at its back, with great and unlimited potential, and no peers on this planet. It led the world in math, science, education; we sent a man to the moon and explored space. All signs pointed upward.

Those days are now over, for America is no more than a shadow of its former self. This is still a very young country as compared to other nations of the world. We are still the most powerful nation in the world, but only military. We still have the largest economy in the world, though it is currently in a critical state, beginning to unravel.

America no longer leads the world, we are no longer on the rise and, in fact, we are rapidly regressing. We have arrived at this low point in our history, not because of the acts of other nations, but simply because we seem to have lost those attributes and skills that once made this a great nation. We used to be proactive, now we are reactive. We used to be creative and innovative; we are now unable to figure out how to create jobs for the multi-millions of Americans collecting unemployment. And, during all this turmoil, the profits of corporations and Wall Street are soaring.

Respected economists understand that an economy thrives and grows when it has a stable, work force that spends its earnings to purchase of products; that's what should happen in a healthy economy. That proven theory has been thrown out the window by the profiteers that replaced long term thinking with the lust for short term profits. The result is that the fat cats on Wall Street and at the highest levels of corporations are doing famously while millions of Americans are trying to find some way just to survive.

Our government is spending hundreds of billions of dollars that we don't have and, as a result, our national debt is nearing \$14 trillion. But the leaders in the White House and Congress say, "Not to worry, we can simply pass this debt into the future, and our children and grandchildren will take care of it; trust us, they'll find a way." What a bunch of spineless incompetents.

Where has the wealth of America gone, what did we do with the money that is necessary to support the foundations of our nation? That's easy to answer. The fact is that 53% of every taxpayer dollar goes to the Pentagon budget, the CIA, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, veterans' benefits and healthcare; in other words to the military war machine. That's not how a nation remains an economic power; that's a toxic recipe for economic collapse.

President Obama, the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize winner (a historical travesty), doesn't know the first thing about creating jobs for American workers but he is becoming a master at the art of employing America's young to pursue resource wars in Central Asia. Positive domestic needs such as jobs, infrastructure and education are not being addressed, but the negatives, such as senseless foreign wars, continue to be his primary areas of concentration.

America, the European nations, and other allies are tied together in the military organization called NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This military alliance was formed in 1949 and based upon the North Atlantic Treaty which was designed to protect member nations from attacks by belligerent nations, specifically Russia. That alliance still has Russia in its sights but its reach has greatly expanded into other areas with its current concentration being in Central Asia, specifically in Afghanistan.

NATO's objectives have dramatically changed over the years and here's why. The U.S. and its European partners have one common connection. It's the growing need for energy, primarily from petroleum and natural gas. Who are the "haves" and who are the "have-nots?" Well the NATO partners are clearly the have-nots while the haves are Russia, various nations in Central Asia and the Middle East.

It now becomes clear that NATO has been transformed from a defensive alliance into an offensive war machine whose objective is to fight resource wars. Now do we see why the U.S. and NATO are in Afghanistan and pushing into Pakistan? Does anyone actually think that they are there to guarantee the safety of Americans, to spread democracy, to protect women's rights and to leave just as soon as the Afghan people can take care of their own security?

Those nations have the oil and gas that the U.S. and Europe need and the NATO partners control it. Not by using diplomacy, negotiations and contracts such as China is doing all over the world, but by using aggressive military force. It might not be the right and honorable way to go about it, and it may be extremely costly, but that is the direction that has been chosen.

A meeting of NATO representatives has just been concluded in Lisbon, Portugal. It was decided that NATO forces will be withdrawn from Afghanistan beginning in 2014 when security operations will be shifted to Afghan forces. That's no more than a smoke screen. The Afghan forces, many of which are closely connected to the Taliban, may pretend they share NATO's objectives but that's quite problematic. It's a good bet that the U.S. and NATO will remain in this deepening quagmire for many, many years in their quest to control the resources of Central Asia.

The fact is that this occupation in Afghanistan is going to get more and more costly for all members of NATO and, especially, the U.S. which is carrying the bulk of the load. Many of you may have heard the saying, "We may go down but we'll go down fighting." If America keeps on doing exactly what it is doing, and refuses to reverse direction, then that's exactly what is going to happen; it (and we) will go down fighting.

This government and our national media have masterfully played the fear card of constant terrorist threats and have managed to keep the people of America trapped in a state of passive submissiveness, all in the name of patriotism. Those whose aim is to follow an agenda of perpetual war know that they have Americans boxed into a corner and they intend to keep it that way; if we continue to let them. They know that there is no way that they can possibly justify these senseless foreign wars, either legally or morally, so they use the combination of fear and patriotism as their strategy; so far, it is working.

The American people must break out of this box. We cannot continue to accept and condone this kind of misguided foreign policy and watch in silence as the monumental costs tear at the foundations of our economy, our infrastructure and, yes, the moral fabric of our nation. It is time to use the power of the people to demand an end to this agenda of permanent war. It worked before; massive, peaceful protests brought an end to the Vietnam War, as well as an end to the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. They can work again.

We are living in a most critical time in our history. If we refuse to stand up and fight for our country in its time of great need, then future generations will pay a terrible price for our failings. And we will have no one else to blame but ourselves because we will have become our own worst enemy.

Michael Payne is an independent progressive who writes articles about domestic social and political matters as well as American foreign policy. His major goal is to convince Americans that our perpetual wars must end before they bankrupt our nation. His articles have appeared on [Online Journal](#), [Information Clearing House](#), [Peak Oil](#), [Google News](#) and websites around the world.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [11:40 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Friday, November 26, 2010

Tom Eley: US Corporations Shatter Profit Records

Thanksgiving in America: US corporations shatter profit records

By Tom Eley [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 25, 2010 | WSWS | OpEdNews

US corporations took in \$1.659 trillion in the third quarter, breaking records going back 60 years, according to a Commerce Department report released Tuesday. It was the seventh consecutive quarter of profit growth at "some of the fastest rates in history" according to the *New York Times*.

If any more proof were needed, the third quarter profit record exposes the lie promoted by Democrats and Republicans alike that only the "free market" and private businesses can reverse the nation's 9.6 percent unemployment rate. The corporations and banks are sitting on a cash horde in the trillions of dollars. This money is not being used to hire workers, but to line the pockets of the executives and top shareholders.

The profit bonanza that lasted from July through September eclipsed the old record of \$1.655 trillion established in the third quarter of 2006--just as the money-mad speculation of the financial elite was hurtling the US and world economy toward the precipice of its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

The resulting financial crisis, which erupted in the autumn of 2008, threatened a total collapse of the global financial system. In response, the governments of the world, led by the US, used the disaster to hand over tens of trillions in public wealth to the very finance houses that triggered the crisis. This process continues, as demonstrated by the International Monetary Fund/European Union-dictated rescue of the Irish banks this week.

The enormous profit realized by US corporations in the third quarter are only the latest indication that the Bush-Obama bailout of the financial and corporate elite has achieved its desired aim of protecting the personal fortunes of the rich:

*Annual bonuses rose by 11 percent for executives at the 450 largest US corporations last fiscal year, according to a recent survey published by the *Wall Street Journal*. Overall, median compensation--including salaries, bonuses, stocks, options and other incentives--rose by three percent to \$7.3 million in 2009. Shareholder returns increased by 29 percent.

*An October survey by the *Wall Street Journal* found that employees at 35 of the biggest banks, investment banks, hedge funds, money management firms, and securities exchanges will be paid a record \$144 billion in 2010.

*According to *Forbes* magazine, the net worth of the 400 richest Americans increased by 8 percent in 2010, to \$1.37 trillion, more than the GDP of India, population 1.2 billion.

These vast fortunes have been made possible through the impoverishment of the working class, the vast majority of the population that must work in order to maintain itself.

*In 2009, 15 percent of all US households, about 50 million people, went part or all of the year without enough food to eat, according to a recent report from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). More than a third of these households, home to one million children, went without meals on a regular basis.

*A record 49.9 million US adults went without health insurance for at least part of the past year, up from 46 million in 2008, according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The uninsured now constitute 26.2 percent of the total adult population, more than one in four, up from 24.5 percent two years ago.

*Average annual wages for US workers fell by \$457 in 2009, and the median annual wage fell by \$247 to \$26,261, according to recently updated data from the Social Security Administration (SSA).

*The US Census Bureau found that about 44 million Americans were living in poverty in 2009, the highest number on record and an increase of 3.8 million in one year. Nearly 19 million Americans were living in extreme poverty in 2009, defined as half of the official poverty level, an increase of 11 percent in one year.

This sampling -- many similar statistics could be cited -- paints a portrait of a financial oligarchy literally gorging itself at the expense of the population. Yet this reality, which permeates every aspect of life in the US, has only whetted the appetite of the elite and its political servants.

The holiday season finds the lame duck 111th Congress putting the finishing touches on two years of wealth redistribution to the rich. It is almost certain to extend Bush-era income tax cuts for the richest Americans.

On November 30, five days after the Thanksgiving holiday, unemployment benefits will expire for 1.2 million workers due to Congressional inaction. By Christmas and the New Year, this figure will swell to 2 million. The fate of these workers and the several million children who depend on them, tossed out without cash income into the worst job market in seven decades, is of little consequence to the millionaires and multi-millionaires who populate Congress.

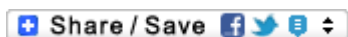
One result of these policies is that more people than ever, including those with jobs, are forced to turn to soup kitchens, even on a day when families traditionally gather for a holiday associated with the "bountiful harvest." Charities across the country are reporting record demand for help on Thanksgiving--a holiday established at a national level by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 to honor the material abundance of the Republic, even in the midst of the Civil War.

On the other side of the social divide is an uninhibited orgy of greed, documented most recently by a Wednesday story in the New York Times ("Signs of Swagger, Wallets out, Wall Street Celebrates.") From cosmetic plastic surgery to high-priced art auctions, from rental properties in the Hamptons to bachelor parties that cost tens of thousands of dollars, "Wall Street's moneyed elite are breathing easier again," the article states.

The stranglehold over society and the economy exercised by this parasitic social layer, this modern-day aristocracy, must be broken once and for all.

Tom Eley is the author of numerous articles and writes regularly from a Socialist perspective on national and international issues for the [World Socialist Web Site](#) (WSWS), the voice of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:15 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Pam Martens: Ten Ideas to Starve the Wall Street Beast](#)

A Citizen's Counter Strategy
Ten Ideas to Starve the Wall Street Beast
by Pam Martens [article link](#)
November 23, 2010 | CounterPunch

Dialogue on the economic crisis has focused on *symptoms*: bailouts, corruption on Wall Street, collapse in housing prices, intractable unemployment, Federal Reserve monetary policy. Most people have been socialized to silence on the topic of the disease itself: debilitating *wealth concentration*. We hear little on the overwhelming argument that wealth concentration is the root cause of the lingering crisis because within milliseconds of the words escaping into the public arena, screams of "Socialist! Socialist!" proliferate; an army of right wing talk radio buffoons fill the airwaves with dire warnings of the growing communist threat of wealth redistribution; Rick Santelli spazzes out on CNBC; and the Tea Partiers figuratively (or literally) stomp on us.

The people who scream the loudest aren't the super rich who control the wealth; they're part of a labyrinthine network of hired hands who function as high pitch bodyguards for the wealth hoarders. The actual super rich are the folks who appear on the Forbes list of the wealthiest Americans; people like Charles and David Koch, each worth \$21.5 billion, who create multi layers of front groups, like Americans for Prosperity, to make it not only socially acceptable to hoard wealth but social nirvana. The Kochs hold secret confabs with their wealthy friends once a year, fingering their worry beads and plotting to keep the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest, lest they become number 6 on the Forbes list of billionaires instead of number 5. This, while 43 million of their fellow Americans live beneath the poverty level; including one in every 5 children.

David Barber, Associate Professor of American History at the University of Tennessee, is not afraid of the cacophony from the wealth hoarders' cabal, writing bluntly about the dangers of wealth concentration. In response to an email query last week, Dr. Barber said:

"American society's fantastically skewed distribution of wealth stands as one of the main structural fault lines underpinning the Crash. America's richest one percent of the population own over forty percent of America's wealth — exclusive of home ownership — in this, the most opulent society history has ever known. On the other hand, the bottom sixty percent of Americans own approximately one percent of all of America's wealth. Maintaining the Bush tax cuts for the rich only perpetuates a part of the contradiction which brought on the present phase of the world economic crisis."

Dr. Barber's statistics come from a study conducted by Edward N. Wolff for the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College in March 2010. Other findings from that study include the following:

The richest 1 percent received over one-third of the total gain in marketable wealth over the period from 1983 to 2007. The next 4 percent also received about a third of the total gain and the next 15 percent about a fifth, so that the top quintile collectively accounted for 89 percent of the total growth in wealth, while the bottom 80 percent accounted for 11 percent.

In 2007, the top 1 percent of households owned 38 percent of all stocks; the top 5 percent owned 69 percent; the top 10 percent held 81 percent.

Debt was the most evenly distributed component of household wealth, with the bottom 90 percent of households responsible for 73 percent of total indebtedness.

Wealth concentration in too few hands while the general populace is saddled with too much debt to buy the goods and services produced by the corporations, in whom the wealthiest hold 81 percent of the stock, is a replay of the conditions leading to the crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression. (The Social Security system was borne out of that debacle. This time around, the wealthiest hope to use the funds from the bottom 90 percent flowing into the Social Security trust to prop up stock prices for the benefit of the top 10 percent. Any action today which postpones the inevitable process of more equitable wealth distribution, such as privatizing Social Security or retaining the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest, will simply hasten the onset of more economic pain which will broaden out to devour the wealth of the upper quintiles through deflation.)

Writing in his book, "The Worldly Philosophers," Robert Heilbroner explained the situation leading up to the depression of the 1930s:

"The national flood of income was indubitably imposing in its bulk, but when one followed its course into its millions of terminal rivulets, it was apparent that the nation as a whole benefited very unevenly from its flow. Some 24,000 families at the apex of the social pyramid received a stream of income three times as large as 6 million families squashed at the bottom -- the average income of the fortunate families was 630 times the average income of the families at the base....And then there was the fact that the average American had used his prosperity in a suicidal way; he had mortgaged himself up to his neck, had extended his resources dangerously under the temptation of installment buying, and then had ensured his fate by eagerly buying fantastic quantities of stock -- some 300 million shares, it is estimated -- not outright, but on margin, that is, on borrowed money."

In both eras, Wall Street ceased being an allocator of capital to worthy enterprises and became an institutionalized system of rigged wealth transfer. The primary artifices this time around included issuing knowingly false stock research; lining up large institutional clients to buy at predetermined prices (laddering) on the first day of a new issue of stock – this made the price appear to soar and thus sucked in the small investor; threatening to take the stock broker's commission away (penalty bid) if the broker let the small investor take profits in the newly issued stock – the practice was known as flipping and was reserved for the big boys. When the tech mania went bust and the rigged game was revealed, the small investor left in droves. Wall Street, with the Fed's able assistance, fueled the next bubble – housing – and crafted complex derivatives to turn this market into a cash cow for Wall Street and foreclosures for Main Street.

The January 21, 2010 Supreme Court decision to allow corporations to have staggering financial influence in our elections (Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission) and the November 2, 2010 results of the midterm election should send a bone chilling message. Help is not on the way. The end game of this massive wealth concentration is long-term deflation, economic misery and multiple generations who will look back on us as the hapless society who couldn't tame the Wall Street greed machine for want of a plan.

Thinking Americans can no longer wait for politicians to save us. When a dedicated public servant like Senator Russ Feingold from Wisconsin is unceremoniously tossed out and a billionaire-financed Senator like Rand Paul from Kentucky is sworn in on a so-called populist mandate, the baton for economic salvation falls to the individual. I offer below ten ideas to get started on the first course of starving the Wall Street beast. And, just to be clear to those perched on the edge of their seats preparing to scream "Socialist!," I'm not suggesting "redistributing" wealth; I'm suggesting putting the wealth back into the hands from which it was taken in a rigged wealth transfer scheme.

(1) Shorten Your Home Mortgage: Former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis summed it up: "We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both." The Wall Street beast is thriving on interest on our debt and using it to hire lobbyists and fund politicians who will work for their interests, not ours.

According to March 31, 2009 data from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, four Wall Street behemoths control 35 percent of all the insured bank deposits in the U.S. and 46 percent of the assets (although the quality of those "assets" is very much a subject of debate). Those firms are: Bank of America Corporation, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Wells Fargo & Co. and Citigroup, Inc. That leaves the other 8,242 FDIC insured banking institutions to share the balance. The total domestic deposits were \$7.5 trillion with total assets of \$13.5 trillion as of March 2009. That is far too much wealth concentration in too few hands as we've sadly learned from having to bail out those four institutions.

Seek your accountant and/or financial advisor's advice about converting your 30 year mortgage to a 15 year to move wealth from the bank's shareholders pockets to yours. Rates have never been more favorable for such a move. Typically, over the life of the loan, you will save tens of thousands of dollars of interest. You can look at the savings for your specific situation by clicking on the mortgage calculator at www.bankrate.com. (I'm not endorsing any of the bank loans offered at this site since I haven't done any research in that area; I'm just suggesting the use of the mortgage calculator.)

Talk to your children before they buy a home about the interest differential between a 30-year and 15-year mortgage over the life of the loan. Show them how to use the mortgage calculator.

(2) Think Local: Consider moving money as it becomes liquid out of the big Wall Street banks that have an iron grip on your Congress and moving it into FDIC insured certificates of deposit at your community bank (being careful not to exceed the insurance limits). A good rule of thumb is to ladder maturities to coincide with when you will need the money. Again, you should consult with your accountant and/or financial advisor. This will also help provide loan funds to local businesses and residential housing in your area.

(3) Start a Business: Don't worry about the possible arrival of the pink slip; be proactive. Start a business on the side. Do well by doing good: what product or service can you provide that a struggling consumer wants and can afford. (Ideas might include: debt counseling, low cost child care, foreclosure counseling, a pick-your-own fruit and vegetable business if you own farm land, consignment shop, home staging services to help with quicker resales.)

(4) Invest Wisely: Get smart with your 401(k). Investing in the S&P 500 is simply feeding the beast; the beast that's using your cheap capital to hire lobbyists, create PACs and separate you from representative government. Some 401(k) plans allow you to roll over 50 percent or more to your own IRA after reaching a certain age. Call your benefits office and find out what your options are. Speak to your accountant and/or financial advisor before making any move. You may also want to consider opening an IRA at a community bank and buying insured CDs as an alternative to putting more funds in the 401(k).

(5) Check Out Credit Union Membership: Do you have a family member that belongs to a Credit Union? Chances are they can get you an account there. If you need to use a credit card, try to get one through the credit union at a reasonable rate and then cut up any high-rate card. It's an outrage that some of the banks that required a citizen bailout are getting their money from the Federal Reserve at almost no cost while charging struggling citizens 20 percent interest.

(6) Don't Use Credit Cards from Corporations That Abuse You: All of the following have one thing in common: Home Depot, Exxon Mobil, Shell, Macy's, Sears, Zales. They all extend credit to their customers on a Citigroup credit card. Forty million customers are helping to prop up Citigroup and its anti-consumer, anti-citizen practices by using these cards. Citigroup makes its workers sign away their rights to go to court (see number 8 below) and has serially abused investors through corrupt practices.

(7) Brand Attacks: Chances are high that your local storeowners don't have a PAC and lobbyists on K Street working against your interests? Reward them with your business and starve the S&P 500 firms until they get the message: if you want me to honor your brand, honor my right to representative government.

(8) Return the Courts to Workers: Many of the largest corporations force workers to sign away their rights to the Nation's courts as a condition of employment. It's called mandatory arbitration and it's an unfair process that is rigged to favor the corporation. If you interview for a new job, ask if the company has such a policy and walk away if they do.

(9) Complain: Don't let shady practices go undetected. Write a detailed report and file it with the appropriate body: local district attorney, state attorney general's office, consumer protection groups; and write a letter to the editor to the local paper. This helps good businesses prosper and starves dirty businesses of customers.

(10) Just Say No: To frontal nudity photographs/skin radiation/genitalia groping; all just to board a plane. Don't fly. You will be standing up for civil rights and starving Wall Street. Body scanner companies trade on Wall Street and the bankers are hoping domestic surveillance is their new cash cow.

Pam Martens worked on Wall Street for 21 years; she has no security position, long or short, in any company mentioned in this article. She writes on public interest issues from New Hampshire. She can be reached at pamk741@aol.com

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Makwana/Parsons: Rethinking the Global Economy: The Case for Sharing

Rethinking the Global Economy: The Case for Sharing

by Rajesh Makwana and Adam Parsons [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 26, 2010 | Share the World's Resources (STWR) | CommonDreams

As the 21st Century unfolds, humanity is faced with a stark reality. Following the world stock market crash in 2008, people everywhere are questioning the unbridled greed, selfishness and competition that has driven the dominant economic model for decades. The old obsession with protecting national interests, the drive to maximise profits at all costs, and the materialistic pursuit of economic growth has failed to benefit the world's poor and led to catastrophic consequences for planet earth.

The incidence of hunger is more widespread than ever before in human history, surpassing 1 billion people in 2009 despite the record harvests of food being reaped in recent years. At least 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty, a number equivalent to more than four times the population of the United States. One out of every five people does not have access to clean drinking water. More than a billion people lack access to basic health care services, while over a billion people - the majority of them women - lack a basic education. Every week, more than 115,000 people move into a slum somewhere in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Every day, around 50,000 people die needlessly as a result of being denied the essentials of life.

In the face of these immense challenges, international aid has proven largely ineffective, inadequate, and incapable of enabling governments to secure the basic needs of all citizens. Developed countries were cutting back on foreign aid commitments even before the economic downturn, while the agreed aid target of 0.7 percent of rich countries' GDP has never been met since it was first conceived 40 years ago. The Millennium Development Goals of merely halving the incidence of hunger and extreme poverty, even if reached by 2015, will still leave hundreds of millions of people in a state of undernourishment and deprivation. When several trillion dollars was rapidly summoned to bail out failed banks in late 2008, it became impossible to understand why the governments of rich nations could not afford a fraction of this sum to 'bail out' the world's poor.

The enduring gap between rich and poor, both within and between countries, is a crisis that lies at the heart of our political and economic problems. For decades, 20 percent of the world population have controlled 80 percent of the economy and resources. By 2008, more than half of the world's assets were owned by the richest 2 percent of adults, while the bottom half of the world adult population owned only 1 percent of wealth. The vast discrepancies in living standards between the Global North and South, which provides no basis for a stable and secure future, can only be redressed through a more equitable distribution of resources at the international level. This will require more inclusive structures of global governance and a new economic framework that goes far beyond existing development efforts to reduce poverty, decrease poor country debt and provide overseas aid.

In both the richest and poorest nations, commercialisation has infiltrated every aspect of life and compromised spiritual, ethical and moral values. The globalised consumer culture holds no higher aspiration than the accumulation of material wealth, even though studies have shown that rising income fails to significantly increase an individual's well-being once a minimum standard of living is secured. The organisation of society as a competitive struggle for social position through wealth and acquisition has led to rampant individualism and the consequences of crime, disaffection and the disintegration of family and community ties. Yet governments continue to measure success in terms of economic growth, pursuing ever-greater levels of GDP - regardless of the harmful social consequences of a consumption-driven economy.

Although the crises we face are interlinked and multidimensional, the G20 and other rich nations offer no vision of change towards a more sustainable world. The old formula, based on deregulation, privatisation, and the liberalisation of trade and finance, was unmasked by the economic crisis and shown to be incapable of promoting lasting human development. Multilateral institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have failed the world's poor, and the myth that economic growth will eventually benefit all has long been shattered. As we also know, endless growth is unsustainable on a planet with finite resources. This impasse is further compounded by ecological degradation and climate change - the

side-effects of economic 'progress' that disproportionately affect the poorest people who are least to blame for causing these multiple crises.

Humanity's ability to effectively address these interrelated crises requires governments to accept certain fundamental understandings that are instrumental to securing our common future. Firstly, that humankind is part of an extended family that shares the same basic needs and rights, and this must be adequately reflected in the structures and institutions of global governance. And secondly, that many basic assumptions about human nature that inform the thrust of economic decision making - particularly in industrialised nations - are long outdated and fundamentally flawed. The creation of an inclusive economic framework that reflects our global interdependence requires policymakers to move beyond the belief that human beings are competitive and individualistic, and to instead accept humanity's innate propensity to cooperate and share. This more holistic understanding of our relationship to each other and the planet transcends nations and cultures, and builds on ethics and values common to faith groups around the world. It also reflects the strong sense of solidarity and internationalism which lies at the heart of the global justice movement.

International Unity

The first true political expression of our global unity was embodied in the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. Since then, international laws have been devised to help govern relationships between nations and uphold human rights. Cross-border issues such as climate change, global poverty and conflict are uniting world public opinion and compelling governments to cooperate and plan for our collective future. The globalisation of knowledge and cultures, and the ease with which we can communicate and travel around the world, has further served to unite diverse people in distant countries.

But the fact of our global unity is still not sufficiently expressed in our political and economic structures. The international community has yet to ensure that basic human needs, such as access to staple food, clean water and primary healthcare, are universally secured. This cannot be achieved until nations cooperate more effectively, share their natural and economic resources, and ensure that global governance mechanisms reflect and directly support our common needs and rights. At present, the main institutions that govern the global economy are failing to work on behalf of humanity as a whole. In particular, the major bodies that uphold the Bretton Woods mandate (the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation) are all widely criticised for being undemocratic and furthering the interests of large corporations and rich countries.

A more inclusive international framework urgently needs to be established through the United Nations (UN) and its agencies. Although in need of being significantly strengthened and renewed, the UN is the only multilateral governmental agency with the necessary experience and resources to coordinate the process of restructuring the world economy. The UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been adopted by all member states and embody some of the highest ideals expressed by humanity. If the UN is rendered more democratic and entrusted with more authority, it would be in a position to foster the growing sense of community between nations and harmonise global economic relationships.

Being Human

Establishing more inclusive structures of global governance will only remedy one aspect of a complex system. Another key transformation that must take place is in our understanding and practice of 'economics' so that government policies can become closely aligned with urgent humanitarian and ecological needs.

The economic principles that have fashioned the world's existing global governance framework - particularly in relation to international trade and finance - can be traced back to the moral philosophy of Enlightenment thinkers during the emergence of industrial society in Britain. Drawing on the ideas of these early theorists, mainstream economists have assumed that human beings are inherently selfish, competitive, acquisitive and individualistic. Such notions about human nature are now firmly established as the principles upon which modern economies are built, and have been used to justify the proliferation of free markets as the best way to organise societies.

Particularly since the 1980's, these basic economic assumptions have increasingly dominated public policy and pushed aside ethical considerations in the pursuit of efficiency, short-term growth and profit maximisation. But the 'neoliberal'

ideology that institutionalised greed and self-interest was fundamentally discredited by the collapse of banks and a world stock market crash in 2008. As a consequence, the global financial crisis reinvigorated a long-standing debate about the importance of morality and ethics in relation to the market economy.

At the same time, recent experiments by evolutionary biologists and neuro-cognitive scientists have demonstrated that human beings are biologically predisposed to cooperate and share. Without this evolutionary advantage, we may not have survived as a species. Anthropological findings have long supported this view of human nature with case studies revealing that sharing and gifting often formed the basis of economic life in traditional societies, leading individuals to prioritise their social relationships above all other concerns. As a whole, these findings challenge many of the core assumptions of classical economic theory - in particular the firmly held belief that people in any society will always act competitively to maximise their economic interests.

If humanity is to survive the formidable challenges that define our generation - including climate change, diminishing fossil fuels and global conflict - it is necessary to forge new ethical understandings that embrace our collective values and global interdependence. We urgently need a new paradigm for human advancement, beginning with a fundamental reordering of world priorities: an immediate end to hunger, the securing of universal basic needs, and a rapid safeguarding of the environment and atmosphere. No longer can national self-interest, international competition and excessive commercialisation form the foundation of our global economic framework.

The crucial first step towards creating an inclusive world system requires overhauling our outdated assumptions about human nature, reconnecting our public life with fundamental values, and rethinking the role of markets in achieving the common good. In line with what we now know about human behaviour and psychology, integrating the principle of sharing into our economic system would reflect our global unity and have far-reaching implications for how we distribute and consume the planet's wealth and resources. Sharing the world's resources more equitably can allow us to build a more sustainable, cooperative and inclusive global economy - one that reflects and supports what it really means to be human.

This article has been adapted from sections of a recent booklet entitled [Sharing the World's Resources - An Introduction](#).

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Johann Hari: There Won't Be a Bailout for the Earth

There Won't Be a Bailout for the Earth

by Johann Hari [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 26, 2010 | The Independent/UK | CommonDreams

Why are the world's governments bothering? Why are they jetting to Cancun next week to discuss what to do now about global warming? The vogue has passed. The fad has faded. Global warming is yesterday's apocalypse. Didn't somebody leak an email that showed it was all made up? Doesn't it sometimes snow in the winter? Didn't Al Gore get fat, or something?

Alas, the biosphere doesn't read Vogue. Nobody thought to tell it that global warming is so 2007. All it knows is three facts. 2010 is globally the hottest year since records began. 2010 is the year humanity's emissions of planet-warming gases reached its highest level ever. And exactly as the climate scientists predicted, we are seeing a rapid increase in catastrophic

weather events, from the choking of Moscow by gigantic unprecedented forest fires to the drowning of one quarter of Pakistan.

Before the Great Crash of 2008, the people who warned about the injection of huge destabilizing risk into our financial system seemed like arcane, anal bores. Now we all sit in the rubble and wish we had listened. The great ecological crash will be worse, because nature doesn't do bailouts.

That's what Cancun should be about - surveying the startling scientific evidence, and developing an urgent plan to change course. The Antarctic - which locks 90 percent of the world's ice - has now seen eight of its ice shelves fully or partially collapse. The world's most distinguished climate scientists, after recording like this, say we will face a three to six feet rise in sea level this century. That means the drowning of London, Bangkok, Venice, Cairo and Shanghai, and entire countries like Bangladesh and the Maldives.

And that's just one effect of the way we are altering the chemical composition of the atmosphere. Perhaps the most startling news story of the year passed almost unnoticed. Plant plankton are tiny creatures that live in the oceans and carry out a job you and I depend on to stay alive. They produce half the world's oxygen, and suck up planet-warming carbon dioxide. Yet this year, one of the world's most distinguished scientific journals, *Nature*, revealed that 40 per cent of them have been killed by the warming of the oceans since 1950. Professor Boris Worm, who co-authored the study, said in shock: "I've been trying to think of a biological change that's bigger than this and I can't think of one." That has been the result of less than one degree of warming. Now we are on course for at least three degrees this century. What will happen?

The scientific debate is not between deniers and those who can prove that releasing massive amounts of warming gases will make the world warmer. Every major scientific academy in the world, and all the peer-reviewed literature, says global warming denialism is a pseudo-science, on a par with Intelligent Design, homeopathy, or the claim that HIV doesn't cause AIDS. One email from one lousy scientist among tens of thousands doesn't dent that. No: the debate is between the scientists who say the damage we are doing is a disaster, and the scientists who say it is catastrophe.

Yet the world's governments are gathering in Cancun with no momentum and very little pressure from their own populations to stop the ecological vandalism. The Copenhagen conference last year collapsed after the most powerful people in the world turned up to flush their own scientists' advice down a very clean Danish toilet. These leaders are sometimes described as "doing nothing about global warming." No doubt that form of words will fill the reporting from Cancun too. But it's false. They're not "doing nothing" - they are allowing their countries' emissions of climate-trashing gases to massively increase. That's not failure to act. It's deciding to act in an incredibly destructive way.

The collapse of Copenhagen has not shocked people into action; it has numbed them into passivity. Last year, we were talking - in theory, at least - about the legally binding cap on the world's carbon emissions, because the world's scientists say this is the only thing that can preserve the climate that has created and sustained human civilization. What are we talking about this year? What's on the table at Cancun, other than sand?

Almost nothing. They will talk about how to help the world's poor "adapt" to the fact we are drying out much of their land and drowning the rest. But everybody is backing off from one of the few concrete agreements at Copenhagen: to give the worst-affected countries \$100bn from 2020. Privately, they say this isn't the time - they can come back for it, presumably, when they are on rafts. Oh, and they will talk about how to preserve the rainforests. But a Greenpeace report has just revealed that the last big deal to save the rainforests - with Indonesia - was a scam. The country is in fact planning to demolish most of its rainforest to plant commercial crops, and claim it had been "saved."

Karl Rove - who was George W. Bush's chief spin-doctor - boasted this year: "Climate is gone." He meant it is off the political agenda, but in time, this statement will be more true and more cursed than he realizes.

It's in this context that a new, deeply pessimistic framework for understanding the earth's ecology - and our place in it - has emerged. Many of us know, in outline, the warm, fuzzy Gaia hypothesis, first outlined by James Lovelock. It claims that the Planet Earth functions, in effect, as a single living organism called Gaia. It regulates its own temperature and chemistry to create a comfortable steady state that can sustain life. So coral reefs produced cloud-seeding chemicals which then

protect them from ultraviolet radiation. Rainforests transpire water vapour so generate their own rainfall. This process expands outwards. Life protects life.

Now there is a radically different theory that is gaining adherents, ominously named the Medea hypothesis. The paleontologist Professor Peter Ward is an expert in the great extinctions that have happened in the earth's past, and he believes there is a common thread between them. With the exception of the meteor strike that happened 65 million years ago, every extinction was caused by living creatures becoming incredibly successful - and then destroying their own habitats. So, for example, 2.3 billion years ago, plant life spread incredibly rapidly, and as it went it inhaled huge amounts of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This then caused a rapid plunge in temperature that froze the planet and triggered a mass extinction.

Ward believes nature isn't a nurturing mother like Gaia. No: it is Medea, the figure from Greek mythology who murdered her own children. In this theory, life doesn't preserve itself. It serially destroys itself. It is a looping doomsday machine. This theory adds a postscript to Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest. There is survival of the fittest, until the fittest trash their own habitat, and do not survive at all.

But the plants 2.3 billion years ago weren't smart enough to figure out what they were doing. We are. We can see that if we release enough warming gases we will trigger an irreversible change in the climate and make our own survival much harder. Ward argues that it is not inevitable we will destroy ourselves - because human beings are the first and only species that can consciously develop a Gaian approach. Just as Richard Dawkins famously said we are the first species to be able to rebel against our selfish genes and choose to be kind, we are the first species that can rebel against the Medean rhythm of life. We can choose to preserve the habitat on which we depend. We can choose life.

At Cancun, the real question will be carefully ignored by delegates keen to preserve big business as usual. Do we want to ramp up global warming with filthy fossil fuels, or make the leap to a clean planet fuelled by the sun, the wind and the waves? Right now we are making the wrong choice. But we could change the ending of this story, if we act decisively. Long after our own little stories are forgotten, this choice we make now will still be visible - in the composition of the atmosphere, the swelling of the seas, and the crack and creak of the great Antarctic ice. Do we want to be Gaia, or Medea?

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Johann Hari is a columnist for the London Independent. He has reported from Iraq, Israel/Palestine, the Congo, the Central African Republic, Venezuela, Peru and the US, and his journalism has appeared in publications all over the world.

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[Michael Parenti: Fascism: A False Revolution](#)

Fascism: A False Revolution

by Michael Parenti (1996) [article link](#)

September 24, 2007 | Thomas Paine's Corner | Dandelion Salad

[*Thomas Paine's Corner Editor's Note:* Many liberals and people on the left have grown accustomed to invoking the word "Fascism" when defining just about any oppressive regime that restricts civil liberties, assaults workers' organizations, or does the bidding for the rich. Unfortunately, there is a broad spectrum of rightwing authoritarian regimes that also do just that, without being, technically speaking, "Fascist." In fact, both rightwing military dictatorships and fascism have similar class programs, the repression of labor being a top priority, and a number of other overlapping features, but the distinguishing trait of a genuine fascist regime is not just its reactionary, fiercely anti-communist character, but the fact that it rests on a one-party state with a mass base usually drawn from the petit bourgeoisie and the lower middle class. Fascism

is therefore a type of rightwing mass movement feeding off of racism, fierce chauvinism, often malignant nativism (as manifested, for example, in anti-Semitism), and grandiose warmongering goals. The essay below, by renowned political analyst Michael Parenti, clarifies and expands many of these points. But before we go there, consider what Benito Mussolini himself had to say about the nature of fascism:

“...Fascism [is] the complete opposite of...Marxian Socialism, the materialist conception of history of human civilization can be explained simply through the conflict of interests among the various social groups and by the change and development in the means and instruments of production.... Fascism, now and always, believes in holiness and in heroism; that is to say, in actions influenced by no economic motive, direct or indirect. And if the economic conception of history be denied, according to which theory men are no more than puppets, carried to and fro by the waves of chance, while the real directing forces are quite out of their control, it follows that the existence of an unchangeable and unchanging class-war is also denied – the natural progeny of the economic conception of history. And above all Fascism denies that class-war can be the preponderant force in the transformation of society...

After Socialism, Fascism combats the whole complex system of democratic ideology, and repudiates it, whether in its theoretical premises or in its practical application. Fascism denies that the majority, by the simple fact that it is a majority, can direct human society; it denies that numbers alone can govern by means of a periodical consultation, and it affirms the immutable, beneficial, and fruitful inequality of mankind, which can never be permanently leveled through the mere operation of a mechanical process such as universal suffrage....”

Well, so much for Il Duce’s patience with egalitarianism.....]

Fascism: A False Revolution

Fascism is a false revolution. It makes a revolutionary appeal without making an actual revolution. It propagates the widely proclaimed New Order while serving the same old moneyed interests.

Before World War I, Benito Mussolini was a socialist, but the minute the wealthy classes in Italy offered him financial support and power, he didn’t hesitate to switch sides. (We know about people who switch sides, don’t we?) And with the huge sums he got from wealthy interests, Mussolini was able to project himself onto the national scene as the leader of a movement that specialized in attacking unions, peasant farm cooperatives, socialists, communists, and anarchists. After World War I, to maintain profit levels, the large industrialists and big land owners had to slash wages and raise prices. The state, in turn, had to provide the big owners with massive subsidies and tax exemptions. To finance this corporate welfarism, the populists had to be taxed more heavily, and social welfare expenditures drastically cut. (Does all of this sound familiar?) But the government wasn’t completely free to apply harsh measures because many Italian workers and peasants had their own unions and fairly strong political organizations. With demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, factory takeovers, they won substantial concessions in wages and work conditions and the right to organize and were able to defend their standard of living. To roll back that standard of living and to get the economic changes that the plutocrats and tycoons wanted, the ruling interests had to abolish the democratic rights that helped workers and peasants defend that standard. The solution was to smash their organizations and their political liberties. The leaders of industry, along with top bankers and agribusiness associations, met with Mussolini to plan and finance the so-called “Fascist Revolution.” Within two years after seizing state power, Mussolini had shut down all opposition newspapers and crushed the socialist, liberal, Catholic, democratic, and republican parties, which together had commanded about 80% of the vote.

In Germany, there was a very similar pattern of complicity between fascists and capitalists. German workers and farm laborers had won the eight-hour day, unemployment insurance, the right to unionize. They had built very powerful political organizations, but heavy industry and big finance were in a state of near total collapse. Business wanted to cut wages and get tax-cuts and massive state subsidies to revive profit levels. The German tycoons greatly increased their subsidies to Hitler, and the Nazi party was propelled onto the national stage.

Who did Mussolini and Hitler support once they seized state power? In both countries a strikingly similar agenda was pursued. Labor unions and strikes were outlawed, union property and publications were confiscated, farm cooperatives were handed over to rich private owners, big agribusiness farming was heavily subsidized. In both Germany and Italy the

already modest wages of the workers were cut drastically; in Germany, from 25-40%; in Italy, 50%. In both countries the minimum wage laws, overtime pay, and factory safety regulations were abolished or turned into dead letters. Taxes were increased for the general populace, but lowered or eliminated for the rich and big business. Inheritance taxes for the wealthy were greatly reduced or abolished. Both Mussolini and Hitler showed their gratitude to their business patrons by handing over to them publicly owned and perfectly solvent steel mills, power plants, banks, steamship companies ("privatization," it's called here). Both regimes dipped heavily into the public treasury to refloat or subsidize heavy industry (corporate welfarism). Both states guaranteed a return on the capital invested by giant corporations and assumed most of the risks and losses on investment. (Sounds like S&Ls, doesn't it?)

As in all reactionary regimes, public capital was raided by private capital. As a result, in Italy during the 1930s the economy was gripped by recession, a staggering public debt, and widespread corruption, but industrial profits rose, and the armaments factories busily rolled out the weapons. In Germany, unemployment was eased somewhat because of the massive arms program and the arms spending. But generally, poverty increased. But from 1935-1943, the net income of German corporate leaders rose 46%. In both countries, the conditions of labor deteriorated greatly: speed-ups, dismissals, imprisonment for workers who complained about unsafe or inhumane work conditions, longer hours for less wages.

Much of politics is the rational manipulation of irrational symbols. In fascism, these irrational, atavistic appeals go back to the mythical roots of the people: for Mussolini, back to the grandeur that was Rome; for Hitler, the ancient volk. Then there's the cult of the leader: Il Duce, the Führer. With leader worship and state worship came the glorification of militarism, war, and conquest—basically conservative symbols to get people distracted from their own immediate political/economic class-interests and get them galvanized into war, the conquest, militarism.

Fascist doctrines stress one people, one state, one leader. The people are no longer to be concerned with class divisions, but must see themselves as part of a harmonious, authoritarian whole, a view that supports the socioeconomic status quo. In contrast, a left agenda advocates a sharpened awareness of class injustice and class struggle, the articulation of popular demands and the self-generated participation of popular forces.

Fascism, especially the Nazi version, had an explicit commitment to racism. Human attributes are said to be inherited through blood. Genetics and biology are said to justify the existing class structure (just as our academic racists today are doing with their bell curve theories and their warmed over eugenics clap-trap.)

Fascism also supports sexual inequality and homophobia. The oppression of gays was criminal and homicidal; the oppression of women was traditionally patriarchal. "Women's greatest calling is to tend to the needs of her husband and children, producing as many [children] as she can for the state."

In Nazi Germany, racism and anti-Semitism were used to rechannel some legitimate grievances to irrelevant enemies (scapegoating). Many middle-class Germans knew they were victimized by powerful economic forces, but they were too bound up in the conventional social order to adopt a revolutionary course, so they went in a fascist direction and started voting for the Nazi parties.

Anti-Semitic propaganda was very emotive and irrational, but cleverly crafted to appeal to certain groups. Workers and peasants were told, "It's the Jewish capitalists, the Jewish usurers, who are doing this." The middle class was told, "It's the Jewish trade union leaders and the Jewish communists who are doing this." The superpatriots were told, "The Jew is the enemy alien, an internationalist." This is the rational use of irrational symbols and arguments.

What distinguished fascism from ordinary right-wing autocracies was the way it attempted to cultivate a revolutionary aura and give the impression of being a mass movement. Fascism offers a beguiling mix of revolutionary sounding mass-appeals and reactionary class politics. The Nazi party's full name was the National Socialist German Workers Party. Both the Italian fascists and the Nazis consciously tried to imitate the left: youth organizations, mass mobilizations, rallies, parades, banners, symbols, slogans, uniforms. And I think for this reason, too, many mainstream writers treat fascism and communism as totalitarian twins. But most workers and peasants could tell the difference. Industrialists and bankers could tell the difference. And certainly the communists and the fascists could tell the difference.

Western capitalist states have tolerated and cooperated with fascism. After World War II, the Western capitalist allies did little to eradicate fascism from Italy or Germany except for the Nuremberg trials, but the police, the courts, the military, security agencies, the bureaucracy have remained largely staffed by those who had served the former Nazi regimes, or their ideological recruits, and that remains true to this day. How do you murder six million Jews, a half million Gypsies, several million Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, and others, and thousands of homosexuals, and get away with it? The only way you get away with it is that the very people who are supposed to look into these crimes were themselves complicit.

What happened to the U.S. businesses that collaborated with fascism? Corporations like DuPont, Ford, General Motors, ITT, owned factories in these enemy countries that produced fuel, tanks, and planes that wreaked havoc on Allied forces during World War II. After the war, instead of being prosecuted for treason, ITT collected \$27 million from the U.S. government for war damages inflicted on its German plants by Allied bombings. General Motors collected \$33 million. Since the war, U.S. leaders have done their part in keeping Italian fascism alive, giving millions of dollars to right-wing organizations and neo-fascist organizations in Italy.

A coalition of neo-fascist and separatist groups headed by media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi won the 1994 elections in Italy. Their platform: a single tax rate for rich and poor alike, school vouchers, a stripping away of the welfare state, the introduction of private retirement accounts, and, of course, the privatization of just about everything. The Italian neo-fascists are learning from the American reactionaries how to achieve fascism's goals under democratic forms with democratic facades-use an upbeat, Reaganesque optimism; convince people that government is the enemy (especially its social democracy aspects); strengthen the repressive capacities of the state; instigate resentments against the newly arrived immigrants; and preach the imaginary virtues of the free market.

The political center is always described as a kind of moderate place between the extremes of left and right. A closer reading of history should tell us that the center is more inclined to make common cause with the right against the left, because the center and the right share a commitment to corporate capitalism and the free market mythology. In the United States consider how gently, for generations, the murderous, lynching night riders, the Ku Klux Klan was treated by federal authorities in this country. Compare that to the way the Black Panthers were treated. Consider how the right is investigated, compared to the left. When the Center for Cuban Studies in New York was bombed by a right-wing Cuban group, which boasted, admitted, they did the act, the FBI didn't have a clue, couldn't find them.

Far from being moderates, as they're always labeled, people in the political center are quite capable of the most immoderate and extremist acts imaginable. It was the Democratic Party who gave us the loyalty purges of the late 1940s. It was the Democratic Party that gave us Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Vietnam. It wasn't the John Birch Society that tried to bomb Indochina into the Stone Age. It wasn't the American Nazi Party that perfected napalm. Napalm was developed at Harvard. It wasn't the Nazis who put thalidomide in the defoliants used throughout Indochina. And today, it's not the skinheads or the Klan or the militia that maintains the death squads and other homicidal operations throughout so much of the Third World. It's the best and the brightest of the political center, with plenty of help from the right wing. The way the mainstream shades off into the fascist right can be seen quite clearly in the Republican Party. The GOP agenda today is really not much different from the kind pushed by Mussolini and Hitler; it's fascism without the swastika, it's fascism in a pinstriped suit. First, break the labor unions, depress wages, and impose a rightist ideological monopoly over the media.

The rest of the GOP agenda is to eliminate cultural dissidents and the arts, attack the rights of women and gays, abolish taxes for the big corporations and the rich, eliminate government regulations designed for worker and consumer safety and environmental protection, privatize and plunder public lands and enterprises, wipe out public services-and cloak this whole reactionary agenda in a kind of a revolutionary sound. Newt Gingrich talks about the GOP "revolution." Some revolution! It's the same old reactionary class agenda. And today in the United States, some middle class Americans, like the middle class Germans of yore, beset by real economic difficulties, turn their anger toward irrelevant or imaginary foes: the immigrants, the Jews, the poor, the welfare mothers, people of color, feminists, gays, atheists, and others.

Growing numbers of us have lost our skepticism that "it could never happen here" because it is happening here. We are facing the Nazi-like Omnibus Counter-Terrorism Bill of 1995, which in effect suspends all Constitutional rights for anyone designated by the President as a terrorist, and anyone giving aid to those labeled terrorists. If you give money to an organization, it might go to their radical wing and you can be labeled a terrorist.

Something else explains the speed-up of reactionism in America today. For years the United States leaders and political and economic elites saw themselves in mortal combat with communism for the allegiance of peoples at home and abroad. They argued that U.S. workers enjoyed a higher standard of living than their counterparts who lived under communism. That was always a theme. "Our workers earn more, our workers live better than anybody under communism, so stick with capitalism." Competition with an anti-capitalist system sets limits on how far to mistreat the working populace. Long before the collapse of communism they tried to break unions, they tried to depress wages, but now they're dropping all pretenses at capitalism with a human face.

The potential threat of workers getting radicalized wasn't the only restraining factor. It was also the working class's ability to fight back, to win democratic victories, the eight-hour day, Social Security and various benefits. When the communist nations were overthrown in Eastern Europe, a very interesting querulous and irate note began to appear in some of the conservative publications. It went like this: "Eastern Europe is now moving toward a total free market, so why must we here in the United States still have to tolerate these collectivistic, liberal regulations and restraints that are put upon us? Now is the time to sock it to the public. There's no reason why masses of people in this country should have a middle class living standard. It's time these people lower their expectations, work harder, and be satisfied with less.

With the collapse of communism, there's been a shift in policy toward the Third World too. "You're not going to turn to Moscow now, Moscow's in our pocket." So they're hitting them hard. The IMF, the World Bank, GATT, NAFTA, are undermining the sovereignty of Third World nations, plundering their markets, drastically cutting non-military foreign aid, and in some cases directly invading them and destroying the government that had any reformist tendencies or was maintaining economic development. U.S. leaders are making war against economic nationalism in countries like India, Brazil, Mexico, Iraq, Panama, South Korea, Taiwan and so forth.

A lot of people on the left still don't get it- that these guys are playing for keeps, that they are going after you, that they are not going to leave any little bit for you. There's only one thing that the ruling circles throughout history have ever wanted- all the wealth, the treasures, and the profitable returns; all the choice lands and forests and game and herds and harvests and mineral deposits and precious metals of the earth; all the productive facilities and gainful inventiveness and technologies; all the control positions of the state and other major institutions; all public supports and subsidies, privileges and immunities; all the protections of the law and none of its constraints; all of the services and comforts and luxuries and advantages of civil society with none of the taxes and none of the costs. Every ruling class in history has wanted only this- all the rewards and none of the burdens.

The danger of fascism comes not from skinheads or the militia or the Christian right fanatics. It comes from the ongoing practices of the National Security State and its various enforcement agencies; it comes from the boardrooms of corporate America. But before we pronounce ourselves doomed, keep in mind that at the present time, there are people who are demonstrating and getting arrested and raising hell to protect the environment and the forests; there are others who are doing the same at nuclear submarine bases; there are people who are demonstrating for justice and against racism in the judicial system as the national protests for Mumia Abul-Jamal show. There are people protesting against nuclear testing in the South Pacific, against Medicare cuts and family assistance cuts, against the suppression of the homeless, against the anti-immigration laws, and for affirmative action. There are large majorities in this country who even support welfare, if you don't call it welfare, if you say "Should government help the poor, should government do more for the poor?"

We have to get a lot angrier and a lot more determined. They want everything, and everything is at stake. Many people are getting angry; our job is to see that they direct their anger at the real perpetrators of their misery, and not against the very people who want to make common cause with them.

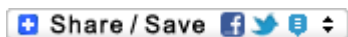
When the power of capital is increasingly untrammelled, all of us are put at risk: the environment, the sacred forests, the beautiful and mysterious creatures of the sea, the ordinary people who, with their strength and brains and inventiveness create community and give to life so much that's worthy of our respect. The real burden to society is not the poor, but the corporate rich. We simply can no longer afford them.

Conservatives complain whenever we fight back; they say we're engaging in "class war." Well, I believe it is class war, but I also have another name for it. When people unite against the abuses of wealth and privilege, when they activate

themselves and militantly attack the hypocrisies and lies of the powers that be, when they fight back and become the active agents of their own destiny, when they withdraw their empowering responses and refuse to toe that line, I call that “democracy.” Their first loyalty is to the dollar; our first loyalty is to democracy and to the well-being of our society and our Mother Earth.

Michael Parenti (born 1933) is an American political scientist, historian, and media critic. He received his Ph.D. in political science from Yale University and has taught at several universities, colleges, and other institutions. He is the author of twenty books and many more articles. His works have been translated into at least seventeen languages. Parenti lectures frequently throughout the United States and abroad. His book, [The Assassination of Julius Caesar](#), was selected as Book of the Year (2004) by Online Review of Books. He is the father of author and The Nation magazine contributor Christian Parenti.

Dandelion Salad [blog home](#)
Michael Parenti [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [7:54 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Thursday, November 25, 2010

[Mammon's Instrumentation of Evil](#)

MM Book 1 Chapter 1-3

We have been inured by a concept, a category of thought ... in our pockets is a weapon of war, a weapon of mass destruction, which cumulatively has killed more people, destroyed more lives, has wrought more environmental destruction than any other weapon ever devised by man – it is an ancient weapon, and it claims all: this weapon demands sacrifice [blood and sweat], it demands complete surrender and obedience, it demands “worship” – all life is equated with this weapon, its use *is* the “means” of life [all is acquired by violent use of this weapon]; all blessings and punishments are equated, peace and happiness are equated, status and “worth” for life are equated, mind [very thought] is equated [intellectual “property”], even God is equated with this weapon [the ultimate lie]; we are governed by this weapon, it is held over our heads and to our throats, lest we should think or speak against it – this weapon of war is regarded as a weapon of peace, as the very cure for the disease that “it” actually is – we [all of us], by *use* of this weapon *become* the enemy, our enemy, and by its use we are committing collective suicide; **this weapon is an instrumentation of evil, and we personify evil by its use** – this weapon is known by all, sought by all, and excused by all; all is done in its name and service: THIS WEAPON [OF EVIL] IS MONEY*, AND OUR USE OF IT !! – this weapon *is* absolute [idol] power and author-ity and conveys such to those who wield and control it !! *[as corporate debt-instrument]

MM Book 1 Chapter 1-4

There are writings thousands of years old warning about this weapon and its use; **God’s Word explains for us two “ways of life”: a “society of the gift” [giving life (God) to us], or a “society of the take” [taking life from us]**; all prophecy, as determinant [not prediction], lays out the choice for us [the blessings and cursings], and gives us the example of our ancestors [Israel], those chosen [small in number and in slavery] and called out of the world’s systemic, to create the alternative, by introducing God to the world, and applying Him in the world, yet the Bible relates the story of Israel’s failure, and the story remains the same today [physically and spiritually] !! – MAMMON [the “business” of] *or* MESSIAH continues as our choice !! – the equating of Mammon with Messiah is our present state of being: BABYLON [confusion by mixing (God is not the author(-ity) of confusion)], where money [corporatized as weapon] is *equated* with life !! – to give consideration or regard to its use, to be a friend or an associate [support and maintenance] of it, IS THE ROOT [cause] OF ALL EVIL !! – **the corporate nation, society and church are wholly opposed to our God(-ing), and must be *withdrawn* from [Moses], we must *return* to our God [Elijah] !!** – we must have a clean heart and washed

hands [innocency]; we must behave wisely and in a perfect way; we must despise [hate] the evil [work] !! – we must recognize God as [our] enabler !!

MM Book 1 Chapter 1-5

The corporate, as “definition of life”, must be rejected in total: GOD *IS* LIFE !! – OUR “SYSTEMIC MIND” MUST BE OF GOD !! – we must “exult” God [prepare the paths; remove the stumbling-blocks]; God has been made irrelevant – Hab. 3:17 systemic failure looming: our selfish mass coveting results in privation for all !! – **the whole concept of “money” as we know it [mind it], is a contagion, DEEP SPIRITUAL ILLNESS !! – selfishness knows no bounds, it is a cancer, consuming all !! – the whole “business” concept of life [as means, as prejudiced claim (Nation-State, society, privilege, etc.), the adversarial competition] must be absolutely rejected, it is anti-God !! – each one of us is responsible for all aspects of our society, the privileged, monied pride, and the abject poverty [physically/spiritually]; it is easy to forsake others when our own human-ity [sodality (our fellowship, brotherhood)] has been abandoned – the specter [object of fear, of dread] of business [as mind] is God(-ing): all iniquity *purged* by mercy and truth !! — the physical is a reflection of the spiritual, and our society fits the definition: monied privilege [in the physical; supported by massive debt of claim] existing in abject poverty [spiritually; including the COG Inc., Laodicean spiritual condition]; the debt burden oppresses and controls most; all claim and its social resultant “poverty” [the commodification of life] is a result of our collective spiritual poverty, our lack of God !!**

MM Book 1 Chapter 1 [web page](#) (widescreen)

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[Randall Amster: Changes in Gratitude: Eternal Thanks for a Nonviolent Future](#)

Changes in Gratitude: Eternal Thanks for a Nonviolent Future

by Randall Amster [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 25, 2010 | Waging Nonviolence | CommonDreams

Let's be honest about this: the world has been coming apart at the seams, and we've been far too complacent about it. Sure, many of us are well aware of the apocalyptic risks of climate change, the social/environmental ravages of perpetual warfare, and the harsh realities of the rise of global corporate fascism. The era in which we live is defined by an incessant news cycle that chronicles the "end of days" trope in real time. And yet, despite occasional outbreaks of resistance, we've mostly been content to watch it play out through the lens of detached denial.

While we may laugh at climate change deniers - including the slate of potential [incoming congressional chairs](#) who will be tasked with overseeing this issue - we might also recognize a grain of personal truth in these jocular reflections. How many of us really have taken all the steps at our disposal to forestall the drivers of climate change, from zeroing our carbon emissions to refraining from the consumption of products responsible for deforestation and mounting waste? Who among us has truly stood resolute against the war machine at every turn, from open and organized tax resistance to educating tirelessly against the fallacies of recruitment? And who has completely disavowed any connection whatsoever with the corporate conglomerate that impose their will on the world?

This isn't an indictment, but more so a statement about the nature of the challenge before us. The array of nonviolent tactics for change at our disposal is vast and always growing, as Gene Sharp has [documented](#). But there is a deeper problem at hand that works against the accrual of these tactics into an effective overall strategy, namely our incontrovertible reliance upon the very forces that we are seeking to alter or abolish. We might attend a protest but eat fast food on the way home.

Perhaps we've changed our light bulbs yet still utilize fossil fuel electricity. Maybe we work with anti-war groups even as we fund war through multiple means. And so on.

We are all so thoroughly implicated in the patterns and practices of conflict and degradation that it is by now nearly impossible to extricate oneself altogether. Our utter dependency on the very system that we aim to alter necessarily imposes limits on how far we might be willing to go in order to dismantle the machinery of destruction. Metaphorically, we can liken our situation to that of being on a rapidly sinking ship and having to somehow construct a new ship out of the old materials without drowning in the process. And to make matters worse, it further appears that we are constrained to use the "[master's tools](#)" in this already long-shot rebuilding process.

This isn't intended to be a fatalistic statement. People before us have anticipated the end of the world and have found ways to stave it off. Yet we must acknowledge that our times are decidedly different: irreversible climatic thresholds are being crossed, essential resources including water and soil are being ruthlessly depleted, violence is systemic and endemic, and the carrying capacity of the planet is being pushed to the brink. All of this has happened in such short order that our moral imaginations have not been given sufficient time to catch up, as Martin Luther King, Jr. has [cogently observed](#) (YouTube):

When we look at modern man, we have to face the fact that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast with a scientific and technological abundance. We've learned to fly the air as birds, we've learned to swim the seas as fish, yet we haven't learned to walk the Earth as brothers and sisters.

Nearly half a century later, we now find ourselves caught in a scenario in which the problems before us are increasing exponentially, and thus could potentially trigger a downward-spiral runaway effect from which no recourse to technological fixes will save us. Indeed, as King suggests, our impoverished spirits exist in inverse proportion to the increasing [technological interpenetration](#) of every aspect of our lives, and the gap between them widens over time. Just as with the use of violence as the dominant "solution" to social problems such as terrorism and crime, likewise do we manifest this "[gambler's fallacy](#)" in our insistence that "doubling down" on current strategies will somehow avert total bankruptcy.

And yet, in this do we find ourselves with a unique opportunity to forge peace from war, abundance from scarcity, and ultimately survival from extinction: just as the repetition of flawed strategies spirals negatively, so too can constructive strategies mutually reinforce one another in a genuine "positive feedback loop." Further, we can celebrate the emerging notion that the challenges before us are not amenable to piecemeal, band-aid solutions, meaning that if we avoid self-imposed extinction it will mean that we have truly, finally, gotten our living right. Here then is a hopeful prospect: our success will be measured in the very existence of future generations, who will find themselves (if at all) in a world that is socially just and environmentally sustainable. There is no other outcome to be found beyond the creation of a fully nonviolent world, since our failure to do so will render all other matters moot.

I have two young children, and in writing this I hope to convey the sense of urgency that will be necessary in order for them to have a future on this planet. Movements for change up to now have been successful primarily in incrementally slowing the gears of destruction - which doesn't sound like much except that it has given us this narrow window of opportunity in which to act. If we squander this opportunity, the fault lies in ourselves; if we embrace it, the benefit will accrue to our progeny, and our forebears will be eternally thankful, as John F. Kennedy [articulated](#) before the United Nations in 1961:

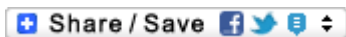
But however close we sometimes seem to that dark and final abyss, let no man of peace and freedom despair. For he does not stand alone. If we all can persevere, if we can in every land and office look beyond our own shores and ambitions, then surely the age will dawn in which the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved. Ladies and gentlemen of this Assembly, the decision is ours. Never have the nations of the world had so much to lose, or so much to gain. Together we shall save our planet, or together we shall perish in its flames. Save it we can - and save it we must - and then shall we earn the eternal thanks of mankind and, as peacemakers, the eternal blessing of God.

Despite a tendency to moralize in my musings, this isn't a how-to guide and I'm not going to be prescriptive here. You already know what needs to be done, and as diligent practitioners of nonviolence you are steeped in how to do it. What I want to get across today is the sense of urgency of the task, the finality of our failure, and the magnitude of our success.

The essence of nonviolence is rooted in an abiding respect for all life and a deep appreciation of the inherent interconnectedness of materiality. In this sense, nonviolence is an expression of mutual interdependence and profound gratitude for the miracle of existence. As oppressed peoples and besieged habitats in the present welcome our solidarity and compassion, so too does the future anticipate our awakening and stand ready to offer its thanks.

Randall Amster, J.D., Ph.D., teaches Peace Studies at Prescott College, and is the Executive Director of the [Peace & Justice Studies Association](#). His most recent book is [Lost In Space: The Criminalization, Globalization, and Urban Ecology of Homelessness](#) (LFB Scholarly 2008).

Waging Nonviolence [Articles](#) by Randall Amster
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Wednesday, November 24, 2010

Jim Hightower: Giving Thanks to Citizens and Grass-Roots Progressives

Giving Thanks to Citizens and Grass-Roots Progressives

by Jim Hightower [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 24, 2010 | Creators Syndicate | CommonDreams

This Thanksgiving, even progressive Americans can find plenty of progress for which we can be grateful.

Let's start with the Girl Scouts of America. When news broke that the national organization for girls had fallen off its ethical pony, many of its grass-roots members and supporters knew that the first job of a citizen is to keep your mouth open.

Sometimes, however, the collective mouth of the American public must roar in order to be heard - and to make things right. Thankfully, this is what happened after it was reported in October that the organization was seeking new bids for the manufacture of uniforms and sashes worn by the 2.4 million girls who're members of GSA. For years, this work has been done by a small, family-owned business in Passaic, N.J. - but scout leaders at headquarters decided to consider shifting the business to three other companies, two of which are overseas, including one in China.

Say what? Girl Scouts of AMERICA would offshore 90 jobs of Passaic workers to China, where factories pay pathetically cheap wages and might even use child labor? GSA executives tried at first to defend this, saying they were "engaging in good business practices," like corporations do. "We have an obligation to deliver the best value to our members," an official declared.

Well, there's "value," but then there are values. Which was GSA choosing ... and which was it teaching the girls? "

This question was at the heart of the public uproar that instantly erupted from members, parents and volunteers. If you want ethically compromised value, they roared, go to Wal-mart - but we came to the Girl Scouts for values.

It took only two days for headquarters to get the message. The bid request was quickly modified to require a U.S. manufacturer and to set strict manufacturing guidelines for the ages and treatment of workers.

Indeed, officials turned their boo-boo into a positive lesson: "We thank the many Girl Scout (advocates) who stood up for their beliefs and showed ... that every voice makes a difference."

See, speaking out matters. So keep roaring.

But there's more to be thankful for, especially after that exhilarating election. Of course, even a car wreck can be exhilarating.

Still, we can see plenty of populist political progress popping up. Rather than looking to Washington, however, look around your own area.

Even though media mavens don't cover it, grass-roots progressives are forging surprising coalitions in such places as Iowa, Houston, Syracuse, central Missouri, New Haven, Ohio and Rhode Island. All across the country, people are producing new solutions and structural changes that add up to real hope for shared prosperity in America. In issues big and small, there's much we can be thankful for ... and build on.

Take a big one that Washington "leaders" - both Republicans and Democrats - bungled: reigning in Wall Street greed. A growing network of more than two dozen local coalitions have joined into an activist force that you can link with by going to www.ShowdownInAmerica.org. Showdown has deployed more than 200 organizers around the country to rally grass-roots support for breaking up too-big-to-fail banks and to decentralize Wall Street's monopolistic power into locally based financial institutions.

Another effort helps you mount your own personal rebellion against the big banksters by withdrawing your money from them. After all, it is your money, so why let the bastards have it? Go to www.MoveYourMoney.info to get how-to steps for transferring your funds into credit unions, community banks and socially responsible investment firms.

The point here is that real change is up to us, not to Obama or the Democratic Party. They are not the progressive movement, we are. And you can find action right where you live to start putting progress back in "progressive."

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National radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and author of the book, [Swim Against The Current: Even A Dead Fish Can Go With The Flow](#), **Jim Hightower** has spent three decades battling the Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That Ought To Be - consumers, working families, environmentalists, small businesses, and just-plain-folks.

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Let's Join a World-Wide Bank Run in December!

by Robert Prasch [article link](#)
November 24, 2010 | CommonDreams
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Bank Run Protest Spreads to USA

By Chaz Valenza [article link](#)
November 23, 2010 | OpEdNews
OpEdNews [home page](#)

Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:34 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Robert Scheer: Fail and Grow Rich on Wall Street

Fail and Grow Rich on Wall Street

by Robert Scheer [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 24, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

Welcome to the brave new world of post-bailout capitalism. The Commerce Department announced Tuesday that corporate profits are at their highest level in U.S. history, and the Fed released minutes of an early November meeting in which officials predicted a stagnant economy and continued high unemployment. The lead on the New York Times story read like a line from a Dickens novel: "The nation's workers may be struggling, but American companies just had their best quarter ever." What the Times story neglected to mention is that the bulk of the increase in corporate profits was nabbed by the financial industry rather than manufacturing and other productive sectors. A whopping \$33.3 billion out of the total corporate profits increase of \$44.4 billion went to the banks and investment houses that those same workers had bailed out with their tax dollars.

Much of the rest of the corporate profit, in the non-financial sector, was also taken out of the hides of workers through increased "productivity" growth-meaning they had produced more for less personal income. Case in point: the plant that GM is reopening in Orion Township, Mich., where, under a deal negotiated with the beleaguered UAW union, 40 percent of the workers crawling through cars on the assembly line will be paid 15 bucks an hour. That's about half the traditional UAW wage.

The Obama administration now feels totally vindicated for bailing out GM. Such a deal. Let's offer up half a clap for the news that GM came back from bankruptcy to mount a successful IPO and pay something back to the taxpayers, which is better than nothing. Some jobs were saved, and that prospect was why folks like me supported this bailout in the first place.

Don't call it a success story: The government unloaded some of its GM stock holdings at a \$10.67 loss over the average per-share price it paid for its \$49.5 billion investment. As the Bloomberg news service noted, "The Treasury, which is taking a loss on its portion of the sale, will break even only if the shares climb more than 60%," referring to the GM shares the Treasury still holds.

Nor should we ignore the fact that GM is a shadow of its former self and its rosier prospects for long-term survival depend primarily on job creation in China, where GM is already a major presence. Or that GMAC, the carmaker's former credit operation, is still majority-owned by the U.S. government and is busily foreclosing on the homes of people they hustled into subprime and otherwise dubious mortgages.

GMAC was no different from others in the financial industry in securitizing mortgages that it should have known were toxic. Restructured as Ally Financial, the company was split off from GM, taking along its burdened debt obligations and benefiting from \$17.2 billion in bailout money. Like the other financial outfits, Ally has enjoyed a range of government support through the Federal Reserve and Treasury. Not so the folks to whom GMAC sold crappy mortgages that are being foreclosed at an alarming rate.

The assumption of both the Bush and Obama administrations was that what was good for the banks would be good for the general economy, but just the opposite has happened. While the financial sector flourishes, the economy stagnates. As The Wall Street Journal reported in its story on the release of the Fed minutes: "Federal Reserve officials downgraded their outlook for the U.S. economy ... projecting that the jobless rate could exceed 8% for two more years and that it won't return to its former vitality for five years or more."

Guess what? The financial benefits are not trickling down. Throwing money at the banks has been as effective as pushing on a string, and the result has been what former Fed Chairman Paul Volcker has excoriated as a "liquidity trap." No serious

government pressure has been brought to bear on the banks to help homeowners stay in their homes through mortgage payment adjustments.

What has occurred is what former International Monetary Fund chief economist Simon Johnson referred in The Atlantic back in May of 2009 as "The Quiet Coup," in which the financial industry is fully in charge of the government's response to our economic problems. The result, he noted, is "the reemergence of an American financial oligarchy" that had been broken by the banking regulations imposed during the New Deal in response to the Great Depression. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's sensible regulations were gutted by Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, and tragically Obama has failed to restore them. The Wall Street lobbyists got their way and unfettered greed prevails. How else to explain last quarter's outrageous profit figures?

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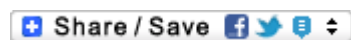
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Mounting Unemployment in America: Poverty and "Social Explosion"

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November 24, 2010 | Global Research

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Tuesday, November 23, 2010

Robert Kuttner: A Perverse Austerity Plan

A Perverse Austerity Plan

by Robert Kuttner [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 23, 2010 | The Boston Globe | CommonDreams

The unemployment rate remains stuck at close to 10 percent. Meanwhile, despite low interest rates, banks are reluctant to lend and businesses are hesitant to invest. Mortgage foreclosures keep rising and real estate values falling. And with the federal stimulus petering out, state budgets anticipate more service cuts and layoffs.

Yet to read the newspapers and watch TV news and talk shows, you would think the top menace facing the country is the projected federal budget deficit in 2020.

The two chairs of President Obama's bipartisan fiscal commission, Democrat Erskine Bowles and Republican Alan Simpson, are promoting an austerity package that would begin cutting public outlay in less than a year. The panel is due to report December 1.

Just for good measure, a private deficit commission chaired by former GOP Senator Pete Domenici and Democratic deficit hawk Alice Rivlin is going the official panel one better, proposing \$5.9 trillion in tax hikes and spending cuts over eight years, compared to the \$3.8 trillion proposed by the president's panel.

Economic masochism has become the national fad, when the real issue is restoring economic growth. According to Bowles, if we don't act soon to rein in the deficit, the economy is on "a path of absolute disaster." Excuse me, but the disaster is here and has nothing to do with projected future deficits.

There are three huge flaws in the austerity program.

First, in a deep and prolonged slump, the economy needs more public outlay, not less, to make up for a paralyzed private economy. With depressed consumer spending, reduced business investment, weak banks, and declining property values each dragging the other down, standard economics dictates that only government demand can step into the breach.

During the Great Depression, the economy got stuck in a similar downdraft. Though weak growth returned by 1934, unemployment was still stuck above 12 percent on the eve of World War II. It was the massive wartime deficits (peaking at 28 percent of GDP compared to less than 9 percent today) that finally produced strong recovery.

Postwar leaders, unlike today's deficit hawks, were wise enough not to panic about the large war debt (twice today's size relative to the economy) but continued such public investments as the GI bill, low-interest home loans, and the interstate highway system. Rather than suffering an austerity scheme that would have made debt loom larger, the postwar boom enabled the economy to grow its way out of debt.

The second flaw is the timing and composition of the proposed deficit reduction plan. Just as after World War II, we need a long-term path to a lower debt. But hikes in taxes and cuts in spending should begin only when the economy is back at full employment, not next year. And the proposed mix of tax increases and spending cuts in the Bowles-Simpson plan is grotesque.

Everything is supposed to be on the table, but repealing the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy is not part of the proposed package. Nor are other notable increases in taxation of the best-off. Two thirds of the deficit-reduction would come from cuts in spending, and the proposed revenue increases would mostly hit the middle class.

A third flaw is the inclusion of Social Security cuts. Social Security has nothing to do with the current deficit, and is in surplus for the next 27 years. If we want to balance the projected long-term Social Security accounts after 2037, the best way is to get more people working and wages growing again, since Social Security is financed by taxes on payrolls.

The deficit hawks have not plausibly explained the connection between belt-tightening and recovery. Supposedly, we need to show our resolve to lower the debt years down the road, in order to give businesses confidence. But let's get real: business is failing to invest because of lack of demand, not because of worries about deficits in 2020.

Commentators are clucking that the commission may deadlock because its Republicans won't raise taxes and its Democrats won't cut spending. We should only be so lucky. If the commission fails, we can get back to the real economic business of promoting a robust recovery.

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Robert Kuttner is co-founder and co-editor of [The American Prospect](#) magazine, as well as a Distinguished Senior Fellow of the think tank [Demos](#). He was a longtime columnist for Business Week, and continues to write columns in the Boston Globe and Huffington Post. He is the author of [A Presidency in Peril: The Inside Story of Obama's Promise, Wall Street's Power, and the Struggle to Control our Economic Future](#), [Obama's Challenge](#), and other books.

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Chris Hedges: Power and the Tiny Acts of Rebellion

Power and the Tiny Acts of Rebellion

By Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 23, 2010 | Truthdig | ICH | OpEdNews

There is no hope left for achieving significant reform or restoring our democracy through established mechanisms of power. The electoral process has been hijacked by corporations. The judiciary has been corrupted and bought. The press shuts out the most important voices in the country and feeds us the banal and the absurd. Universities prostitute themselves for corporate dollars. Labor unions are marginal and ineffectual forces. The economy is in the hands of corporate swindlers and speculators. And the public, enchanted by electronic hallucinations, remains passive and supine. We have no tools left within the power structure in our fight to halt unchecked corporate pillage.

The liberal class, which Barack Obama represents, was never endowed with much vision or courage, but it did occasionally respond when pressured by popular democratic movements. This was how we got the New Deal, civil rights legislation and the array of consumer legislation pushed through by Ralph Nader and his allies in the Democratic Party. The complete surrendering of power, however, to corporate interests means that those of us who seek nonviolent yet profound change have no one within the power elite we can trust for support. The corporate coup has ossified the structures of power. It has obliterated all checks on corporate malfeasance. It has left us stripped of the tools of mass organization that once nudged the system forward toward justice.

Obama knows where power lies and serves these centers of power. The tragedy—if *tragedy* is the right word—is that Obama, after selling his soul to corporations, has been discarded. Corporate power doesn't need brand Obama anymore. They have found new brands in the tea party, Sarah Palin and Glenn Beck. Obama has been abandoned by those who once bundled contributions for him by the millions of dollars. Obama and the Democratic Party will, I expect, spend the next two years being even more obsequious to corporate power. Obama clearly loves the pomp and privilege of statecraft that much. But I am not sure it will work.

Reformers on the outside, while they remain militant and faithful to issues of justice, nevertheless depend on the liberal establishment to respond to public pressure. If these reformers cannot pressure the liberal class and the power elite to evoke real change, they become ineffectual. Our fate is intimately tied to the liberals who have betrayed us. We speak in the language of policies and issues. We will find it harder and harder, given our impotence, to compete with the impassioned calls for new glory, revenge and moral purity that resonate with a public beset by foreclosures, long-term unemployment, bankruptcies and a medical system that abandons them. Once any political system ossifies, once all mechanisms for reform close, the lunatic fringe of a society, as I saw in Yugoslavia, rises out of the moral swamp to take control. The reformers, however well meaning and honest, finally have nothing to offer. They are disarmed.

We have reached a point where stunted and deformed individuals, whose rapacious greed fuels the plunge of tens of millions of Americans into abject poverty and misery, determine the moral fiber of the nation. It is no more morally justifiable to kill someone for profit than it is to kill that person for religious fanaticism. And yet, from health companies to the oil and natural gas industry to private weapons contractors, individual death and the wholesale death of the ecosystem have become acceptable corporate business. The mounting human misery in the United States, which could lead to the sporadic bursts of anger we have seen on the streets of France, will be met with severe repression from the security and surveillance state, which always accompanies the rise of the corporate state. The one method left open by which we can

respond—massive street protests, the destruction of corporate property and violence—will become the excuse to impose total tyranny. The intrusive pat-downs at airports may soon become a fond memory of what it was like when we still had a little freedom left.

All reform movements, from the battle for universal health care to the struggle for alternative energy and sane environmental controls to financial regulation to an end to our permanent war economy, have run into this new, terrifying configuration of power. They have confronted an awful truth. We do not count. And they have been helpless to respond as those who are most skilled in the manipulation of hate lead a confused populace to call for their own enslavement.

[Dr. Margaret Flowers](#), a pediatrician from Maryland who volunteers for Physicians for a National Health Program, knows what it is like to challenge the corporate leviathan. She was blacklisted by the corporate media. She was locked out of the debate on health care reform by the Democratic Party and liberal organizations such as MoveOn. She was abandoned by those in Congress who had once backed calls for a rational health care policy. And when she and seven other activists demanded that the argument for universal health care be considered at the hearings held by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, they were forcibly removed from the hearing room.

“The reform process exposed how broken our system is,” Flowers said when we spoke a few days ago. “The health reform debate was never an actual debate. Those in power were very reluctant to have single-payer advocates testify or come to the table. They would not seriously consider our proposal because it was based on evidence of what works. And they did not want this evidence placed before the public. They needed the reform to be based on what they thought was politically feasible and acceptable to the industries that fund their campaigns.”

“There was nobody in the House or the Senate who held fast on universal health care,” she lamented. “Sen. [Bernie] Sanders from Vermont introduced a single-payer bill, S 703. He introduced an amendment that would have substituted S 703 for what the Senate was putting together. We had to push pretty hard to get that to the Senate floor, but in the end he was forced by the leadership to withdraw it. He was our strongest person. In the House we saw Chairman John Conyers, who is the lead sponsor for the House single-payer bill, give up pushing for single-payer very early in the process in 2009. Dennis Kucinich pushed to get an amendment that would help give states the ability to pass single-payer. He was not successful in getting that kept in the final House bill. He held out for the longest, but in the end he caved.”

“You can’t effect change from the inside,” she has concluded. “We have a huge imbalance of power. Until we have a shift in power we won’t get effective change in any area, whether financial, climate, you name it. With the wealth inequalities, with the road we are headed down, we face serious problems. Those who work and advocate for social and economic justice have to now join together. We have to be independent of political parties and the major funders. The revolution will not be funded. This is very true.”

“Those who are working for effective change are not going to get foundation dollars,” she stated. “Once a foundation or a wealthy individual agrees to give money they control how that money is used. You have to report to them how you spend that money. They control what you can and cannot do. Robert Wood Johnson [the foundation], for example, funds many public health departments. They fund groups that advocate for health care reform, but those groups are not allowed to pursue or talk about single-payer. Robert Wood Johnson only supports work that is done to create what they call public/private partnership. And we know this is totally ineffective. We tried this before. It is allowing private insurers to exist but developing programs to fill the gaps. Robert Wood Johnson actually works against a single-payer health care system. The [Health Care for America Now](#) coalition was another example. It only supported what the Democrats supported. There are a lot of activist groups controlled by the Democratic Party, including [Families USA](#) and MoveOn. [MoveOn](#) is a very good example. If you look at polls of Democrats on single-payer, about 80 percent support it. But at MoveOn meetings, which is made up mostly of Democrats, when people raised the idea of working for single-payer they were told by MoveOn leaders that the organization was not doing that. And this took place while the Democrats were busy selling out women’s rights, immigrant rights to health care and abandoning the public option. Yet all these groups continued to work for the bill. They argued, in the end, that the health care bill had to be supported because it was not really about health care. It was about the viability of President Obama and the Democratic Party. This is why, in the end, we had to pass it.”

“The Democrats and the Republicans give the illusion that there are differences between them,” said Dr. Flowers. “This keeps the public divided. It weakens opposition. We fight over whether a Democrat will get elected or a Republican will get elected. We vote for the lesser evil, but meanwhile the policies the two parties enact are not significantly different. There were no Democrats willing to hold the line on single-payer. Not one. I don’t see this changing until we radically shift the balance of power by creating a larger and broader social movement.”

The corporate control of every aspect of American life is mirrored in the corporate control of health care. And there are no barriers to prevent corporate domination of every sector of our lives.

“We are at a crisis,” Flowers said. “Health care providers, particularly those in primary care, are finding it very difficult to sustain an independent practice. We are seeing greater and greater corporatization of our health care. Practices are being taken over by these large corporations. You have absolutely no voice when it comes to dealing with the insurance company. They tell you what your reimbursements will be. They make it incredibly difficult and complex to get reimbursed. The rules are arbitrary and change frequently.”

“This new legislation [passed earlier this year] does not change any of that,” she said. “It does not make it easier for doctors. It adds more administrative complexity. We are going to continue to have a shortage of doctors. As the new law rolls out they are giving waivers as the provisions kick in because corporations like McDonald’s say they can’t comply. Insurance companies such as WellPoint, UnitedHealth Group, Aetna, Cigna and Humana that were mandated to sell new policies to children with pre-existing conditions announced they were not going to do it. They said they were going to stop selling new policies to children. So they got waivers from the Obama administration allowing them to charge higher premiums. Health care costs are going to rise faster. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimated that after the legislation passed, our health care costs would rise more steeply than if we had done nothing. The Census Bureau reports that the number of uninsured in the U.S. jumped 10 percent to 51 million people in 2009. About 5.8 million were able to go on public programs, but a third of our population under the age of 65 was uninsured for some portion of 2009. The National Health Insurance Survey estimates that we now have 58 or 59 million uninsured. And the trend is toward underinsurance. These faulty insurance products leave people financially vulnerable if they have a serious accident or illness. They also have financial barriers to care. Co-pays and deductibles cause people to delay or avoid getting the care they need. And all these trends will worsen.”

In Manuel de Lope’s novel “The Wrong Blood,” set during the first rumblings that led to the Spanish Civil War, he writes “... nobody knew this at the time and those who had premonitions wouldn’t go so far as to believe them, because fear rejects what intuition accepts.”

But the signs are now so palpable that even fear is not working. Our worst premonitions are becoming reality. Our intuition has proved correct. We are reaching the breaking point. An explosion, unless we halt the increased pressure, seems inevitable. And what is left for those of us who cannot embrace the contaminants of violence? If the system shuts us out how can we influence it through nonviolent mechanisms of popular protest? How can we restore a civil society? How can we battle back against those who will mobilize hatred to cement into place an American fascism?

I do not know if we can win this battle. I suspect we cannot. But I do know that if we stop resisting, if we stop rebelling, something fundamental will die within us. As the corporate vise tightens, as the vast corporate system begins to break down with fossil fuel decline, extreme climate change and the expansion of global poverty, even mundane and ordinary acts to assert our common humanity and justice will be condemned as subversive.

It is time to think of resistance in a new way, something that is no longer carried out to reform a system but as an end in itself. African-Americans understood this during the long night of slavery. German opposition leaders understood it under the Nazis. Dissidents in the former Soviet Union knew this during the nightmare of communism. Resistance in these closed systems was local and often solitary. It was done with the understanding that evil must always be defied. The tiny acts of rebellion—day after day, month after month, year after year and decade after decade—exposed to everyone who witnessed them the heartlessness, cruelty and inhumanity of the oppressor. They were acts of truth and beauty. We must take to the street. We must jam as many wrenches into the corporate system as we can. We must not make it easy for them. But we also

must no longer live in self-delusion. This is a battle that will outlive us. And if we fight, even with this tragic vision, we will lead lives worth living and keep alive another way of being.

Chris Hedges is a senior fellow at [The Nation Institute](#) and writes a [column](#) every Monday for Truthdig. His newest book is "[Death of the Liberal Class](#)."

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Murray Dobbin: The Corporate Drive for Power over Society

The Corporate Drive for Power over Society: Citizen Psychopaths

by Murray Dobbin [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 23, 2010 | Murray Dobbin | Global Research

National governments have been back in the news over the past two years because of the financial crisis and the havoc it wreaked on the global economy. Belying the ideology that nations were obsolete in the grand new order of transnational corporations, they are now front and centre trying to save the corporations that supposedly had replaced them. That is, saving them from themselves — from their greed, overreach, hubris and sheer incompetence.

Yet there is a disturbing silence about the role of corporations in the world as if these private institutions are somehow immutable — created by the heavens and something we have to live with, like the weather. We need to change our way of thinking because corporations are the Frankenstein monsters that will destroy the planet. No amount of so-called “good corporate citizenship” or investment in wind power or electric cars will change this fact — the most important fact that the planet will deal with (or not) in the next century. Imagine what you will regarding what “we” have to do to save the planet. Unless we dismantle this perverse institution and take away its power, the world will descend into another dark age.

Beginning late in the last century, corporations established themselves in law as “natural persons,” a brilliant maneuver that gave these huge, globe-straddling giants the same rights as individual citizens. They, of course, are anything but. Citizens live and die; corporations under current laws live forever. Citizens have wide-ranging responsibilities that are the other side of their entitlements. Corporations are by definition “limited liability” citizens whose CEOs and board members are effectively beyond the reach of the law for the crimes they regularly commit.

They didn’t arrive on the planet like this. We made them what they are through legislation and court decisions and we can, if we choose, undo what we have done. It wouldn’t be easy, but if we never imagine it, it will never happen.

Twenty to 25 years ago the world entered what John McMurtry, professor of philosophy at the University of Guelph, has called the cancer stage of capitalism: “Prior to the 1970s, capitalism had been compelled by the ‘communist threat,’ workers’ movements, and a new electoral accountability to adopt preventive measures against its own internal pathologies.” McMurtry refers to this system of social reforms and democratic responsiveness as capitalism’s immune system. But with the advent of a new political consensus amongst the global elites — the Washington consensus of privatization, deregulation, tax cuts, free trade and cuts to social programs — we have witnessed the explicit dismantling of that immune system. All of capitalism’s “pathologies” have been liberated — symbolized by the phrase (and the movie) “greed is good.” The revelations about the financial industry and the behaviour of its principal actors show how far the cancer has progressed.

Natural selection

UBC professor Robert Hare, one of the world's pre-eminent experts on psychopathology, has written (see his book *Snakes in Suits*) about how the new capitalism and its ruthless advance has actually created a home for what he calls "sub-criminal psychopaths." When corporations want tough, brilliant "leaders" to help them compete and offer almost limitless wealth and power as a reward, they attract psychopathic personalities. Who better to lay off thousands of employees than someone incapable of feeling empathy or remorse?

But if the newest crop of CEOs contains a goodly number of psychopaths, the organizations they lead were already and remain constitutionally sociopathic. Not only do these so-called "citizens" live forever, but they are prevented by law — their fiduciary responsibilities to their shareholders — from taking into consideration the good of society, their employees or the environment. The public good must be subordinated to the profit motive and the drive to increase shareholder value.

Of course, corporations are supposed to obey the laws in these areas. But while it is in the interests of real flesh and blood citizens to obey the law because otherwise they would invite social chaos, it is the interests of corporate citizens to break the law. This is so obvious that there is even a body of corporate legal theory that promotes law-breaking if it leads to increased profits. Two University of Chicago law professors, Frank Easterbrook (also a judge) and Daniel Fischel, wrote over 25 years ago that managers should break the law if it is profitable, and if they get caught they should simply treat the ensuing fine as a cost of doing business. They weren't just talking about fines for double-parking their trucks. They were talking about fraud, corruption, pollution, price-fixing, occupational disease, and bribery — all "externalities" on the road to making a profit. This theory has dominated American corporate thinking for two decades.

The corporate drive for power over society is relentless and the advent of so-called "free trade" — effectively constitutional power for corporations — has made things much worse. Breaking the law and getting caught is an annoying distraction. Why not get governments to sign agreements — like NAFTA — that give corporations the power to prevent governments from passing laws in the first place? Chapter 11 of NAFTA allows corporations to directly sue governments for passing laws which diminish their future profits. ([These suits are increasing every year.](#)) The Harper government wants to place similar provisions in CETA — the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement.

Before corporations ruled the world

How can we even imagine a world in which corporations don't have so much power? It's not that difficult if we take a look back at the early history of corporations in the U.S. (forget Canada, we started out as a corporation). In those days, corporations were given their charters to operate by state governments. They typically had to have their charters renewed every year, had to demonstrate that they served a public purpose and could have their charters yanked if they couldn't do so.

In 1809, the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled that if an applicant's purpose in seeking a charter "...is merely private or selfish; if it is detrimental to, or not promotive, of the public good, they have no adequate claim upon the legislature for the privileges." Charters were routinely denied. In 1832, Pennsylvania revoked the charter of 10 banks, and in 1857 passed a constitutional amendment instructing legislators to "...alter, annul, or revoke any charter of any corporation... whenever in their opinion it may be injurious to citizens of the community." The principle behind challenging a corporation's charter was "quo warranto" — by what authority? Setting up a corporation was a privilege, not a right. Today applicants cannot be turned down for any reason — it is simply a matter of filling out a form — and most provinces have given up their power to revoke corporate charters.

These strict limits on corporations — they could only engage in the single activity described in their charter — began to disappear in the late 1800s as corporations became more powerful. It was perhaps the first example of the race to the bottom scenario: states competed with each other for corporate investment and their judges systematically eliminated restrictions on corporate charters. They re-interpreted the U.S. constitution and changed the common law.

Killing machines

Canadians are not particularly trustful of corporations, but I get the feeling that many people believe that at some point corporations will actually see that things are getting so bad that they will somehow change their ways. In fact, this is literally impossible. The way they are constructed in law and in the economy they are constitutionally incapable of changing the way they operate. They are what they are. They are what we made them.

And you know they're gonna kill us.

No, if we are ever going to save the earth from climate change, pollution, species decline, and the stark-raving-madness of the consumer culture we will have to radically reform the corporation. Anything less and we can kiss the planet goodbye. But that will be so difficult we might as well set our sites even higher and get rid of this dangerously insane "citizen" amongst us — one utterly unredeemable and incapable of rehabilitation. A good start would be to find a compelling case to take to the Supreme Court and have corporations' "natural persons" status removed.

Murray Dobbin is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Monday, November 22, 2010

[Shamus Cooke: Who's Behind The Deficit Crisis](#)

Who's Behind The Deficit Crisis

By Shamus Cooke [article link](#)

November 22, 2010 | CounterCurrents

From the U.S. to Europe media and politicians are singing the same tune: "budget deficits must be drastically reduced -- by cutting social programs -- so that global bond investors do not threaten the economy."

Not since the "war on terror" was announced has government policy been so shrouded in confusion and unanswered questions. In the same way we are not to ask how U.S. foreign policy has angered millions in the Middle East, we must remain equally silent about questioning the recent history behind the current "deficit crisis."

When speaking about the U.S. deficit crisis, the media and politicians focus exclusively on Social Security and Medicare, while ignoring the far more important causes resulting from engaging in multiple wars, running a huge defense budget, bestowing extremely generous tax breaks on the rich and allowing corporate taxes to steadily decline. Then, in addition to these factors, the corporate-based Economist broke ranks and told the truth about how the debt exploded as a result of the expensive bank bailouts near the start of the recession:

"Having spent a fortune bailing out their banks, Western governments [U.S. and Europe] will have to pay a price in terms of higher taxes to meet the interest on that debt. In the case of countries (like Britain and America) that have trade as well as budget deficits, those higher taxes will be needed to meet the claims of foreign creditors." ([May 23, 2009](#)).

But who exactly are the bondholders that working people must sacrifice their social programs for? The media would like us to focus exclusive attention on China, and other "foreign" investors. But, as usual, the enemy is closer to home.

The biggest holder of U.S. debt is the U.S. Federal Reserve. The amount of money the Federal Reserve "loaned" to the U.S. government has skyrocketed during the Great Recession, due in no small part to the multiple bank/corporate bailouts of AIG, Bear Stearns, and other entities. To this day, the amount of money the Fed has squandered on guaranteeing the bad loans of Wall Street banks remains a state secret, although rumored to be in the trillions of dollars.

The second largest holder of U.S. debt is a mixed group of U.S. corporate entities, super rich individuals, and other forms of rich investor groups. This group has grown in size since the start of the recession, when they fled from the risky stock market for safer investments in U.S. Treasury debt. The New York Times explains:

"Bond traders surfed the global liquidity wave, buying up government debt all over the world in the view that, just as most big banks were too big to fail, so were sovereign economies, no matter how crushing their fiscal picture." ([December 14, 2009](#)).

In short, the wealthy people who owned the banks and were bailed out by the U.S. government, used much of their bailout money to buy U.S. Treasury bills (U.S. debt), and are now demanding that their taxpayer-funded investment be made safe by slashing social programs.

To accomplish this, Social Security and Medicare are being targeted by President Obama's Deficit Commission. Former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan recently said that the recommendations from Obama's deficit commission were inevitable:

"The only question is, is it before or after a bond market crisis? Because there's no alternative." ([Reuters, November 14, 2010](#)).

There is indeed an alternative; many in fact. The most obvious one is that taxes be drastically raised on the wealthy bond holders and other rich individuals. It is extremely revealing that no one in the federal government is discussing this option, as President Obama has quickly surrendered on his promise to undo the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

The entire discussion over the U.S. deficit reveals that the priorities of President Obama and the Democrats are the same as those of President Bush and the Republicans: the very wealthy first and working people last.

Unless labor and community groups massively mobilize working people in fighting for a pro-worker solution to the deficit crisis, austerity measures-- like reducing Social Security and Medicare -- will be forced upon us.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for [Workers Action](#). He can be reached at shamuscooke@gmail.com

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[David Michael Green: Human Trafficking As A \(Non-\) Metaphor For Our Times](#)

Human Trafficking As A (Non-) Metaphor For Our Times

by David Michael Green [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 22, 2010 | The Regressive Antidote | CommonDreams

Next to genocide and war, human trafficking is about the most disgusting thing I can think of. For those unfamiliar with the term, human trafficking refers to what is essentially slavery (and I think those who oppose such atrocities would be smart, from a marketing perspective, just to call it that), whether that refers to people trafficked as sexual objects, unpaid labor, or whatever other form of exploitation is involved.

Here we are in the twenty-first century, and this is what Wikipedia says about the extent of the problem: "Trafficking is a lucrative industry. It is now the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. Globally, it is tied with the illegal arms trade, as the second largest criminal activity, following the drug trade. Human trafficking usually affects women and children. The total annual revenue for trafficking in persons is estimated to be between USD\$5 billion and \$9 billion. The Council of Europe states, 'People trafficking has reached epidemic proportions over the past decade, with a global annual market of about \$42.5 billion.' The United Nations estimates nearly 2.5 million people from 127 different countries are being trafficked around the world."

How grim is that?

I'd be happy to write a column opposing the evils of human trafficking, except that it would be an awfully short piece. It's like arguing against, well, war or genocide. Who in their right mind hasn't already figured out the horrors of slavery? And for those who have not (and it's sickening to contemplate the number of people who must be involved - both as buyers and sellers - in order to support a \$5-9 billion 'industry' in slavery), what could one possibly say to change their minds (that is, to make them human), anyhow?

I trust everyone reading this has already figured out that slavery is not okay. But what most Americans do not understand today is the extent to which human trafficking is a metaphor for the American system of political economy these last decades.

And, worse, the degree to which the concept is becoming less metaphorical every day, and more directly representative of our current condition.

Exploitation is what is at the core of slavery. It is an economic relationship that represents the very height of twisted human relations conducted by predatory sociopaths, in which an arrogant few see the rest of us as mere tools for their enrichment and gratification. In their minds, we exist to be exploited no less than does the oil in the ground or the rivers into which they dump pollutants. All of us are there to serve, and we are theirs to serve. Our function is their benefit and their pleasure. Such psychologically unwell individuals find it unfathomable that others might want a life for their own purposes rather to fulfill someone else's extravagant cravings, and find it maximally irritating when any of the rest of us are rude enough to demand being treated accordingly. Free and independent human beings seeking their own modest happiness in life? What an annoyance.

Such people have always existed, of course, but the last two centuries or so have witnessed remarkable changes in human consciousness on this question. Once fixed relationships of exploitation that had lasted for millennia have yielded to historically astonishing claims of equality and to equally unprecedented demands for respect and dignity. In the nineteenth century, slaves and non-slaves alike rose up and demanded an end to that most abhorrent practice. Over the subsequent century, industrial workers forced plutocrats to carve off enough of their riches so that the masses could work reasonable hours, under reasonable conditions, for reasonable amounts of pay. In our time, women and gays and various minority ethnic groups have forced society to treat them with far a greater respect and equality than was ever the case before.

As basic as these notions seem to the conscience of any moderately progressive (or even moderately moderate) soul today, it is well worth remembering how historically unique they are. We live in a moment unlike 99 percent of human history with regard to these concepts of equality and human rights.

But it is slipping away now, and fast.

I find it telling that over the course of the last generation 'personnel' departments of corporations have instead been relabeled 'human resources'. I doubt that's an accident. It speaks to a changed relationship between haves and have-nots. We are resources in their minds, commodities, production inputs, expense lines. The only difference between us and a bundle of ball-bearings or a bag of bauxite is that we resources that are human sometimes get a bit pesky. We require so much more handling and care than non-human resources.

But why dwell on nomenclature and symbolism, though, when we can point directly to statistical evidence, to policies and to outcomes?

It's easily done (for now), and yet the most astonishing and frustrating thing about our time in history is that the most significant political development of the era has been completely hidden in plain sight.

What is it? The most salient political fact about the present moment is that a massive transfer of wealth is well under way, undoubtedly the greatest in all of human history. Middle class - or, increasingly now, formerly middle class - working class and poor Americans are being savaged by oligarchs and their hired-hand kleptocrats running the government on their behalf. The wealthy are vastly richer today than they were thirty years ago, and the rest of us are lucky just to have held our ground, not having improved our condition one bit from what it was in 1980. Actually, those really are the fortunate ones. Many are less lucky, and have been losing jobs and houses - and, what usually follows: marriages and health and life itself - because of this plundering.

Bill Quigley recently summarized the damage: "We now have the highest number of poor people in 51 years. One in five children in the US is poor; one in ten senior citizens is poor. Fifty million people in the US lack health insurance. Women in the US have a greater lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related conditions than women in 40 other countries. About 3.5 million people, about one-third of which are children, are homeless at some point in the year in the US. There are 49 million people in the US who live in households which eat only because they receive food stamps, visit food pantries or soup kitchens for help. Sixteen million are so poor they have skipped meals or foregone food at some point in the last year. This is the highest level since statistics have been kept. Wages have not kept up with inflation; adjusted for inflation they have lost ground over the past ten years. The cost of housing, education and health care have all increased at a much higher rate than wages and salaries. In 1967, the middle 60 percent of households received over 52% of all income. In 1998, it was down to 47%. The share going to the poor has also fallen, with the top 20% seeing their share rise. A record 2.8 million homes received a foreclosure notice in 2009, higher than both 2008 and 2007. In 2010, the rate is expected to rise to 3 million homes. For the first time since the 1940s, the real incomes of middle-class families are lower at the end of the business cycle of the 2000s than they were at the beginning. Despite the fact that the American workforce is working harder and smarter than ever, they are sharing less and less in the benefits they are creating. The wealth of the richest 400 people in the US grew by 8% in the last year to \$1.37 trillion. Income disparity in the US is now as bad as it was right before the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s. From 1979 to 2006, the richest 1% more than doubled their share of the total US income, from 10% to 23%. For the last 25 years, over 90% of the total growth in income in the US went to the top 10% earners - leaving 9% of all income to be shared by the bottom 90%. In 1973, the average US CEO was paid \$27 for every dollar paid to a typical worker; by 2007 that ratio had grown to \$275 to \$1. Since 1992, the average tax rate on the richest 400 taxpayers in the US dropped from 26.8% to 16.62%. The US has the greatest inequality between rich and poor among all Western industrialized nations and it has been getting worse for 40 years. The US ranking of 45 in 2007 is the same as Argentina, Cameroon, and Cote d'Ivoire."

And so on. The disparities are so bad that "Rich people live an average of about five years longer than poor people in the US." Meanwhile, Time Magazine is publishing a story on massively declining marriage rates in America, and one of their conclusions is that only the well-off can afford to get married anymore. How 'bout them conservative family values in action, eh buddy?

It's said that the perfect crime is one that is never even noticed. Well, that's certainly the case here. This economic rape of 300 million people and the consequences it is having for their increasingly short, nasty and brutish lives is about as big a political phenomenon as they come, and yet hardly anyone is talking about it. But I think we can go even one better than perfect in this case. If the perfect crime is one that isn't noticed, then the perfecter crime is one in which the victim begs for more.

Look at us. Most of us are either broken or breaking under the weight of the biggest economic catastrophe since the Great Depression. Both of these disasters were brought to us by the very same people, doing the very same things, for the very same motivations. It's bad enough that we're such fools that we've condemned ourselves to repeat Gilded Age history (this time as farce) during these last thirty years of Reaganism/Bushism. But three weeks ago we came back for a third helping,

electing the exact same people we had just got done throwing out of office for felonious economic depredation only two years ago. How sick is that?

Admittedly, the fact that the pathetic excuse of an alternative to the Grand Old (Bend Over 'Cause We're Gonna Use You For A) Party is so absolutely anemic and determinedly ineffectual didn't help in this election. Nor did the fact that you effectively only get two choices in American politics. But, I mean, come on, man! Can American voters really be so certifiably certifiable as to have returned the Corporate Cons back to power in 2010? Already? Promising to do the very same things they did before, only more so?

Evidently they can. As we speak, the right in Washington (meaning all Republicans and nearly all Democrats, including the president and his team of Goldman Sachs scam artists running an economy of the rich, by the rich, and mos def for the rich - who pretend opposition even while already staging their cave-in) is now fulminating about the absolute necessity of maintaining full Bush era tax 'cuts' to the income of people after their first quarter million bucks, while demanding that the pathetic pittance of unemployment insurance payments be shut off in the middle of the economic holocaust these people created, to make sure we don't encourage laziness amongst the indolent worker bees, doncha know. Never mind that the latter is an excellent economic stimulus and the former is lousy. Never mind that the right is supposedly outraged by deficits and their tax plan would blow another \$700 billion dollar hole in the national debt. And never mind that when you are borrowing money to finance tax 'cuts', they aren't tax cuts at all - they are tax burden transfers, from the rich to the rest of us, and from the old to the young. With added interest, of course.

But these are not only the policies of the old American government, they are the policies of the existing American government, and they are especially the policies of the new American government (where's Pete Townshend when you need him?). If the perfect crime is the one that is unnoticed, and the perfecter crime is the one where victims ask for more, I guess then that the perfectest crime is one in which the victims cannot even recognize the perpetrators for what they are - enemies seeking to do them harm. If you think about it, we live in a truly breathtaking moment in American history. People have lost even the capacity to recognize friend from foe. Rapacious corporate bloodsuckers impoverish us at every turn, and we don't even seem to notice, let alone act in our defense. Yet we increasingly hate our government, the only actor out there - short of our own revolution - that can protect us from this enemy. It is as if, on December 8, 1941, we declared war on the United States Navy rather than the Empire of Japan. Brilliant.

The story of the last three decades in America is the story of predation. It is the tale of wealthy people who demanded to be made super-wealthy instead, and decided that it was a crime against nature for nine-tenths of the population to have anything at all. It is a true crime yarn in which these aristocrats hired first Republicans and then Democrats to do their bidding in Washington, with predictable results.

And its been a huge success. On every key economic front, regressives have won the policy battles of these last thirty years.

They said tax cuts for the wealthy would bring the government increased revenues and would produce jobs for the rest of us. Progressives called these trickle-down lies nonsense, but lost the fight. Now look at our surpluses. Look at our prosperity.

They said that 'free-trade' treaties would be good for America and make us better off. Progressives said that NAFTA, WTO and the rest would lead to American jobs being exported abroad. Now, when an American president goes to India and China, late-night comics tell jokes about how he's over there visiting our jobs.

They said that the economy was being hamstrung by excessive governmental regulation. Progressives tried to remind people of what had happened last time the country lacked legislation like Glass-Steagall and lacked regulation of dangerous industry. You know, stuff like Wall Street going crazy in a fit of greed, knowing that the government would back their bad bets, and crashing the global economy in the process. Stuff like BP recklessly and repeatedly endangering our lives and livelihoods in order to squeeze every penny of profit they could out of dangerous oil drilling projects.

They said that we had to slash government spending on real people because we couldn't afford it anymore. Progressives argued that this would result in folks being thrown into abject poverty with no social safety net even to keep them barely alive. Now Bill Clinton admits that killing welfare in order to buy himself a second term as president (which he used to do precisely nothing whatsoever, above his desk or under it) may not have been the best idea, after all, whilst the country today competes with the likes of Argentina, Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire to see who can produce the ugliest wealth inequalities.

They said that labor unions were hampering American competitiveness, even though the US had absolutely dominated the global economy for decades. Progressives responded that the existing laws governing labor relations were fair to both sides, and gave working people a chance for the first time ever to secure a moderate slice of economic justice. But they lost, and unions have been clobbered ever since. The share of the US workforce protected by organized labor has shrunk from about one-third to less than ten percent, and people's incomes not surprisingly reflect that. This week, the New York Times reports that it is getting worse still: "Organized labor appears to be losing an important battle in the Great Recession. Even at manufacturing companies that are profitable, union workers are reluctantly agreeing to tiered contracts that create two levels of pay. In years past, two-tiered systems were used to drive down costs in hard times, but mainly at companies already in trouble. And those arrangements, at the insistence of the unions, were designed, in most cases, to expire in a few years. Now, the managers of some marquee companies are aiming to make this concession permanent. If they are successful, their contracts could become blueprints for other companies in other cities, extending a wage system that would be a startling retreat for labor."

Jesus Christ, we have to stop kidding ourselves about what we're looking at here. Just as traffickers see their slaves as pure commodities that just happen to have attached arms and legs and tongues and brains, so too do the wealthy in America see the rest of us.

And, increasingly, this is no metaphor. The grand political story of our time is the story of legalized robbery, human exploitation and economic injustice. The rest of it - the Overseas Wars for Dummies, the electorally convenient coded racism, the homophobia manufactured by closeted gay GOP operatives, the whole culture wars shtick - all of it is total bullshit, intended to keep people from noticing the exquisitely manicured fingers inserting industrial grade vacuum cleaners into their every pocket.

I don't have too much doubt that people are going to figure this out eventually and demand some meaningful change in an attempt to redress these crimes, although of course nobody ever went broke betting against the intelligence of the American public. Moreover, regressives have become so expert at framing conventional wisdom, at fear-mongering, history-erasing, outright lying and dumbing down the public that I wonder if people will be able to even imagine an alternative vision for our society. Despite the fact that they actually don't have to imagine it at all. Not so many years ago, we lived it.

In any case, what concerns me more than the question of whether this happens is when it happens, and at what cost it comes to reclaim a stolen country.

Greedy thieves and their political puppets are unlikely to give up their booty lightly, especially when they may have to give up more than that, as did, in the end, Mussolini and Ceausescu.

What's truly distressing, however, is the degree to which we're not even talking about this most significant of political phenomena, even as its vortex sucks us down and drowns us dead.

It's as if the slaves of the pre-Civil War South were actually as happy as their white masters liked to claim they were.

Or perhaps as if they were genuinely unhappy, but blamed their problems on the weather, instead of on slavery, and on those who exploited them so completely and so ruthlessly.

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Saturday, November 20, 2010

[Barry Ferguson: America Surrenders](#)

America Surrenders

by Barry Ferguson [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 18, 2010 | Financial Sense | Silver Bear Cafe

The sad tale of the greatest country in the world unwilling to fight.

I always wondered what it would feel like. A collective will is broken. A great people are humbled. Concessions are made. The symbolic white flag is raised. Surrender is offered. Control is conceded. Power is transferred. A new era begins. 'America' surrenders. It is not a good feeling.

Her people have been demoralized and humiliated by the turnstiles of indiscriminate personal invasion at airports. They have been bullied and intimidated by government regulators wielding authoritarian power. They have had their land and property seized. Their currency has long been hijacked. Skyscrapers have been imploded, military engagements have been fallaciously deployed, and financial promises have been rescinded. American ingenuity and courage have been supplanted by ignorance and cowardice. America can't control her borders, can't control her currency, can't control her economy, can't control her debt, and now entertains words of defeat - 'default' and 'bankruptcy'. America has been through war and she is tired. She surrendered to the Federal Reserve Bank with the acceptance of QE2.

No, there was no military battle and there was no conquering army. America cannot be defeated by conventional military tactics. But America has surrendered to the banker elite. The banker elite poisoned her with profound ignorance and broke her will with virulent debt. They positioned their primary weapon under the noses of her imbecilic Congress (Ron Paul excluded) in Washington and disguised it as the Federal Reserve Bank. Those with functioning brains cells know it to be neither 'Federal' nor a 'Reserve'. But their numbers are minuscule compared to those eager to embrace the idea of a benevolent omniscient omnipotent currency genie. It has been a long and persistent battle. But with the implementation and acceptance of the Fed's QE2, it seems America has finally conceded. She went down without a whimper or hardly a protest. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, without another trillion dollar injection, we risk economic and market calamity. Likewise, according to a heroin pusher, we need another fix. To avoid that scenario, all America has to do is submit to an large debt issuance that the Fed promises to buy and the Fed will let its subjects keep their big houses, shiny cars, and charge cards for a while longer. America has given up control, capital, and currency. She has also spurned the responsibility of credit and self-reliance. The banker elites have finally won. How did they do it? What happens now? We can only pray that God sends us another Andrew Jackson!

First we need to understand the conquerers. Their primary weapons are control of currency and credit. Consider the following quotation from United States Banker Magazine:

"Our top leaders are perfectly aware of the truth. They are presently working at establishing an imperialism of the capital to rule the world. But while they are implementing this plan, they must keep the people busy with political antagonisms."

Continuing:

"We'll therefore speed up the question of reform in the custom rates by the political organization called the Democratic Party; and we'll put the spotlight on the question of protection and of the reciprocity by the Republican Party."

And further:

"By dividing the electorate this way, we'll be able to have them spend their energies at struggling amongst themselves on questions that, for us, have no importance whatsoever, and on which we only touch upon as instructors of the common flock."

Some readers may be familiar with this passage. Most would be surprised to learn that these lines were taken from manuscript first published in 1892 and reprised in different publications through the years. For this article, the following website was used as a [source of the text](#).

As for their strategy, they have not deviated. Again, from 1892:

"Let us make use of the courts... When, through the law's intervention, the common people shall have lost their homes, they will be more easy to control and more easy to govern. and they shall not be able to resist the strong hand of the government acting in accordance with... the control of the leaders of finance." - United States Bankers magazine, 1892 quoted in the Michael Journal, Jan. - Feb., 2003

Clearly, the banker elite have been intent on capturing America for some time and in fact, since the beginning of her sovereignty. Their weapon has been the ability to sell and extend credit in place of real money. The credit weapon is most efficient when detonated from a central location. The banker cartel cleverly waited until the European Central Bank (ECB) was established to rule the European Union members before making the final assault. Now the Fed controlled the US and the ECB controlled Europe. Both central banks could now work through the BIS to expand indebtedness with the use of derivatives and credit default swaps. The real estate bomb was activated. We, the people, took the bait of available credit from the bankers like Eve took the apple from the serpent. The participating banks incurred no risks in extending credit to customers as they were 'guaranteed' to survive by the central banks imposing their 'too big to fail' status. You can read my previous article entitled, [Watch Your Asterisk](#) to learn that even the trillion-plus MBS paper on the Fed's balance sheet is 'guaranteed' by the taxpayer through Fannie and Freddie. The bomb went off with the collapse of real estate. Luetinents like Henry Paulson were dispensed to get the original surrender documents signed. TARP and QE1 quickly followed.

Now we have to understand the conquered. The war, the attacks, and the surrender have all been carried out by well educated, well spoken, well dressed gentlemen who all claim to be on our side. They have all worked to keep the Dow Jones Industrial Average bouyant so the populous's 401(k)s illuminate the illusion of prosperity. This 'illusion of prosperity' has come at a great toll as the average American has seen their real estate values contracted, their wages garnished by the taxation of inflation and government spending, their futures forfeited to a crippled economy, and their currency's purchasing power diminished. The ignorant populus feeds from a bucket of oats while a new master fits them for a bridle and a saddle. Rockets could be fired from a Chinese submarine just off our western coast and the average American would be more concerned about their favorite dancing star on a television program. Money has always been a source of righteous seduction. Likewise, debt has always been the conduit of fiscal glutony. And credit is the irresistible seducer pimped by the banks and coveted by the populace. We wanted more than we could handle. Now we are on all fours with a nefarious banker on our back gouging his spurs into our flanks.

The elite bankers are the victors and the Fed's launch of QE2 is the equivalent to their raising their own flag over Washington. America must now admit that she can't make it on her own. She can't operate her own economy. She can't print her own currency. She can't live under a capitalist philosophy whereby bankrupt banks are allowed to declare bankruptcy. America no longer has the courage to guide her own course or face the truth. Clearly the American people have ceded control over their currency to the Federal Reserve but have now also ceded control of the entire economy. I could give you quotes from the Rothschilds concerning the control of currency and real power but I think we all know that ultimate control over an economy rests in the lap of the currency dispenser. In case you have been watching MSNBC non-stop, that would be the Federal Reserve. The Fed's QE2 program will inject roughly \$112 billion (the announced \$900 billion package divided by the next 8 months) confetti dollars per month for the next eight months into the banks (primarily Goldman, Citi, BofA, and JP Morgan) in exchange for Treasuries and MBS (Mortgage Backed Securities) paper. The economy, the currency, and the Dow Jones Industrials are now in the hands of the Federal Reserve. Will QE2 save America from economic dispare? Let's be honest. Here are a few points to chew on.

1) Is the economy so bad that after a \$2 trillion dollar QE1, it now needs another trillion? I thought the government said the recession was over?

2) If QE1 didn't lower unemployment, why would QE2 do the trick?

3) The Fed is using the excuse of potential deflation to prime the currency pump. Yet, and I won't belabor the point, everything in our immediate economy is inflating in price. In my own personal space, my car battery died. Has anyone bought a battery lately? Mine cost \$103 dollars! I told the guy installing the battery that I am not that old but I remember batteries costing \$50 or \$60 dollars. The technician looked to be in his thirties and said sadly enough he had the same recollection. Deflation? Hardly!

4) The Fed says it wants banks to lend more so therefore they need an injection of cash. Bull-shivers! This is about moving the bad mortgage paper off the bankers' balance sheets and sticking the country with the resulting debt. Treasury purchases are a diversion. War is ugly. If the Fed really wanted to lower the yields on Treasury bonds to make loans more attractive, why don't they buy the bonds or notes directly from the Treasury Department like you and I can? The reason is the Fed is buying America's debts and mortgages with confetti and that kind of money has to be laundered through the banks. Why do they even go to the obvious point to publish the exact time of day that they are going to be buying Treasuries on the 'open market'? Doesn't that allow the shill banks to 'front-run' the Fed's buy program? Isn't that illegal?

5) Why do we as a people allow the Fed to manipulate our economy? Again, the Fed is not 'Federal'. It is a private bank of foreign ownership. Why would I say that? The Fed is not audited and will not allow such an audit. Only a foreign bank would have that authority to rebuff such attempts. Further, why can't we as a people stand on our own two feet? Why do we need constant injections and stimulus from the monetary ruler? When prices are too high, we quit buying. The economy falls into recession. Prices come down. We save our money. We eventually start buying again. The economy grows. Repeat. That's the grand economic cycle. This Fed is intent on keeping our spending up to deplete the country of real capital that is now in foreign hands. We are easier to control this way.

6) Given the Fed's lack of sovereignty, why would we let a foreign power absorb all of our debt paper and real estate paper? Sure, the Chinese and Japanese have already accumulated a lot of our debt. But there is a balance of trade, or an imbalance of trade, at work in that equation. What if a foreign bank in a land with no trading relationship with the US announced a large Treasury purchase? Would we protest? What if Iran announced they were buying a trillion of our Treasury debt? What if Cuba announced they were buying a trillion of our currency debt? Would we allow that to happen? Would we surrender to them? Other countries like Brazil are currently applying hefty taxation to foreign buyers of their debt as an impediment to this parasitic practice.

7) Surely without Fed manipulation, we could anticipate several developments. The Treasury would have to offer higher interest coupons to sell debt thus driving up interest rates. The stock market would fall considerably. The economy would resume a necessary recessionary course. The currency would probably strengthen. Aren't these the very events the Fed is trying to avert? As a people, Americans cannot live with a falling stock market. America can no longer accept reality. Thus, she has waved the white flag.

8) QE2 or QE3 or whatever will finally launder all the bad mortgage debt from the banks' balance sheets. America's debt will soon surmount the \$14,000,000,000,000.00 mark with no peak in sight. More and more of the country's assets will go to pay the interest on the debt. How again, does the country benefit from Fed intervention? Most importantly, that's not even the point. The Fed Chairman's job is to look after the well-being of the Fed!

What happens now? I suspect at some point the Fed will engineer another 'false flag' event to drive stock indices much lower. They will seize upon the opportunity and reach out to the American people who will be cowering beneath their vastly reduced retirement funds. The Fed will likely offer to make the funds whole if the owners agree to convert to a government sponsored annuity. At that point, the Fed will be the largest 'economy' in the world. What would be their production? Slave labor of course. The central bank has proven they will stop at nothing. They are tenacious and persistent. Those who stand in their way have been crushed (except for Andrew Jackson). History has taught us that much. Let me close with a quote from former President, James Garfield.

"Whoever controls the volume of money in any country is absolute master of all industry and commerce... and when you realize that the entire system is very easily controlled, one way or another, by a few powerful men at the top, you will not have to be told how periods of inflation and depression originate." - 1881. President James Garfield - Howard, Milford Wriarson, *The American Plutocracy*, (New York, Holland Publishing Co. 1895) P. 158

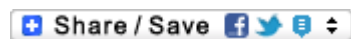
A few weeks after making this statement, Garfield was assassinated (July 2, 1881). The truth can be dangerous.

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Bernie Sanders: The Billionaires Want More, More, More

The Billionaires Want More, More, More

by Bernie Sanders [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 20, 2010 | CommonDreams | OpEdNews

The billionaires are on the warpath. They want more, more, more.

In 2007, the top 1 percent of all income earners in the United States made 23.5 percent of all income -- more than the bottom 50 percent. Not enough! The percentage of income going to the top 1 percent nearly tripled since the mid-1970s. Not enough! Eighty percent of all new income earned from 1980 to 2005 has gone to the top 1 percent. Not enough! The top 1 percent now owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. Not enough! The Wall Street executives with their obscene compensation packages now earn more than they did before we bailed them out. Not enough! With the middle class collapsing and the rich getting much richer, the United States now has, by far, the most unequal distribution of income and wealth of any major country on earth. Not enough!

The very rich want more, more and more and they are prepared to dismantle the existing political and social order to get it. During the last campaign, as a result of the (Republican) Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, billionaires were able to pour hundreds of millions of dollars of secret money into the campaign -- helping to elect dozens of members of Congress. Now, having made their investment, they want their congressional employees to produce.

Republicans in Congress, needless to say, are all on board. The key question is whether a Democratic president and a Democratic Senate go along to get along, or whether they draw a clear line at protecting the interests of the middle class and vulnerable populations of our country while tackling our economic and budgetary problems in earnest.

In the next month, despite all their loud rhetoric about the "deficit crisis," the Republicans want to add \$700 billion to the national debt over the next 10 years by extending Bush's tax breaks for the top 2 percent. Families who earn \$1 million a year or more would receive, on average, a tax break of \$100,000 a year. The Republicans also want to eliminate or significantly reduce the estate tax, which has existed since 1916. Its elimination would add, over 10 years, about \$1 trillion to our national debt and all of the benefits would go to the top 0.3 percent. Over 99.7 percent of American families would not gain a nickel. The Walton family of WalMart would receive an estimated tax break of more than \$30 billion by repealing the estate tax.

That's just the start.

The billionaires and their supporters in Congress are hell-bent on taking us back to the 1920s, and eliminating all traces of social legislation designed to protect working families, the elderly, children and the disabled. No "social contract" for them.

They want it all.

They want to privatize or dismantle Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and let the elderly, the sick and the poor fend for themselves.

They want to expand our disastrous trade policies so that corporations can continue throwing American workers out on the street as they outsource jobs to China and other low-wage countries. Some also want to eliminate the minimum wage so that American workers can have the "freedom" to work for \$3.00 an hour.

They want to eliminate or cut severely the U.S. Department of Education, making it harder for working class kids to get a decent education, childcare or the help they need to go to college.

They want to rescind the very modest financial reform bill passed last year so that the crooks on Wall Street can continue to engage in all of the reckless behavior that has been so devastating to our economy.

They want to curtail the powers of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy so that Exxon-Mobil can remain the most profitable corporation in world history, while oil and coal companies continue to pollute our air and water.

They want to make sure that billionaire hedge fund managers pay a lower federal tax rate than middle-class teachers, nurses, firefighters, and police officers by maintaining a loophole in the tax code known as "carried interest".

We know what the billionaires and their Republicans supporters want. They've been upfront about that. But what about the Democrats? Will President Obama continue to reach out and "compromise" with people who have made it abundantly clear that the only agreement they want is unconditional surrender? Or, will he utilize the powerful skills that we saw during his 2008 campaign for the White House and bring working families, young people, the elderly and the poor together to fight against these savage attacks on their well-being? Will the Democrats in the Senate continue to pass tepid legislation, or will they use their majority status to protect the interests of ordinary Americans and, for a change, put the Republicans on the defensive?

The time is late. The stakes are extraordinary. While it is true that the billionaires and their supporters are "fired up and ready to go," there is another more important truth. And that is that there are a lot more of us than there are of them. Now is the time for us to stand together, educate and organize. Now is the time to roll back this orgy of greed.

Bernie Sanders was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006 after serving 16 years in the House of Representatives. He is the longest serving independent member of Congress in American history.

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How Corporate America Is Pushing Us All Off a Cliff

We can't turn our backs on the big corporations' next big scheme to screw up society. We can be sure the next crash will be much bigger.

By Michael Moore [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 19, 2010 | Michael Moore | AlterNet | Truthout

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:50 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Friday, November 19, 2010

Joe Brewer: Let's Build the New Economy

Let's Build the New Economy

by Joe Brewer [article link](#)

November 19, 2010 | CommonDreams

We need to build a [new economy](#), one that promotes widespread prosperity while protecting us against ecological disaster. The problem is that the current economy has been structured explicitly to extract wealth from the global commons and accumulate it in the coffers of an extremely powerful elite. And it is standing in our way.

I say let the U.S. economy collapse. It's not serving us anyway. Now before you go off and think I'm just a heretic who hates this country, please hear me out.

The current economy is designed to:

- * Encourage widespread home ownership, which straps people to a lifetime of mortgage debt;
- * Mandate that health care only be provided through employers, which enslaves people to meaningless jobs they don't like;
- * Grow perpetually, which means that natural resources must be depleted to keep the gears turning;
- * Accumulate wealth in the hands of those who control capital, which drives a wedge between the haves and the have-nots;
- * Drive the creation of sweat shops all over the world that enslave billions in a cycle of perpetual poverty;
- * Allow corporations to co-opt our democracy, by granting them the rights of legal personhood and defining money as speech;
- * Ultimately destroy the foundations of human well-being, thus spiraling deregulated markets out of control.

As a result, we are seeing massive growth of public debt while a small portion of the population becomes more wealthy than the monarchs of past ages. These billionaires then build incredibly sophisticated [propaganda machines](#) to convince everyday citizens to support their exploitative system.

I would be perfectly happy to let this economy collapse if a better one were to replace it. Luckily, the collapse is about to be accelerated. We're about to see the federal political system become even more dysfunctional. And the life supports for our economy — the vital infrastructure funded by public dollars — is about to be cut even further to extract wealth for the super rich. Tea Party supporters have ensured that the next few years will further corrode the existing economy through the attack of a thousand cuts.

We can take comfort in the knowledge that the global economy of the late 20th Century is in the process of collapsing. It wasn't serving us anyway.

Now is the time for social entrepreneurs to mobilize and begin the creative process of building the foundational institutions of the [21st Century economy](#). Look around and you will see that this effort is already underway. Micro-credit lending institutions are revolutionizing the world of finance (see [Kiva](#) and [Grameen Bank](#)). Social media platforms are [replacing](#) the elite communication systems set up to broadcast information from a central source to the masses. Legal hackers are creating [benefit corporations](#) that merge the social missions of non-profits with the economic power of publicly traded corporations. And urban designers are creating cityscapes that [mimic natural ecosystems](#).

So let's begin the work of building [21st Century political](#) and economic systems. The need is clear and the time is right. Many bottlenecks to progress are about to be removed de facto as state governments grapple with bankruptcy and corporations expand their stranglehold on our judicial and legislative systems. The weakening of our economic foundations will bring with it a loosening of control that these powerhouses have on economic development.

Rough times lie ahead, no doubt about it. But we can take heart in the entrepreneurial spirit of the American people and the considerable economic power of our major cities. A truism that we must all take to heart is that, while the 20th Century was

dominated by nations, the 21st Century will be shaped primarily by cities. If you don't believe me, look at the [rapid urbanization of China and India](#) and ask yourself how many of the remaining resources will be sucked up by the unprecedented growth of buildings, regional transit systems, and commerce in the developing world.

Many Americans are going to be caught off guard when the carpet is pulled out from under their feet. Others will be relieved that we can finally begin to catch up with the rest of the world, presuming of course that our own cities aren't entirely decimated by the hoarding of wealth by short-sighted elites. We currently house most of the world's best research labs and continue to attract global intellectual talent to our shores. (Of course, this may change if the xenophobic tenor of our immigration debate doesn't catch up with the times.) And we have several [awe-inspiring regional economies](#) like the San Francisco Bay Area, Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest, and a number of hubs in New England.

So all you social innovators out there, now is the time to heed the call. Focus your efforts on the new business models, disruptive technologies, collaborative finance systems, and politic organizing platforms. We're going to need you.

The time to build the new economy is upon us.

Joe Brewer is founder and director of [Cognitive Policy Works](#), an educational and research center devoted to the application of cognitive and behavioral sciences to politics. He is a former fellow of the Rockridge Institute, a think tank founded by George Lakoff to analyze political discourse for the progressive movement.

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Legal Schnauzer: Is Warped Christianity Threatening Our Democracy?

Is Warped Christianity Threatening Our Democracy?

By Legal Schnauzer [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 18, 2010 | Legal Schnauzer | Open Salon | ICH

A misguided view of Christianity is chipping away at fundamental American principles, according to a new book about a shadowy religious/political organization in Washington, D.C.

[Jeff Sharlet](#), in the new book [C Street: The Fundamentalist Threat to American Democracy](#), shows how the group known as "The Family" influences foreign policy, the military, and other key elements of our government.

Based on personal experience, I would say a C Street-like mindset has invaded our courtrooms and corrupted our justice system at all levels. We also suspect that many boardrooms, and even universities, are infected with a values system that gives elites exalted status over everyday folks. In the end, this bastardized form of religion might pose a greater threat to America than Osama bin Laden ever could.

This is Sharlet's second book about C Street. In 2008, he wrote [The Family: The Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power](#). In [an interview about his new book](#), with Scott Horton of Harper's, Sharlet provides some frightening insight into the C Street mindset. Much of it is based on a relatively obscure passage from the Bible, Acts 9:15: "This man is my chosen instrument to take my name... before the Gentiles and their kings."

The original passage was about the Apostle Paul. But members of The Family evidently think it applies to them. Horton asks, "How do the men who gather at C Street interpret this passage?" Replies Sharlet:

*year, the Family uses American political leaders—they refer to them as “bait”—to attract foreign leaders they want to evangelize. The focus is on leaders, or “kings.” The Family twists Acts 9:15 into a justification for a complete inversion of Christianity, a faith that, whatever else one thinks of it, was born of a radically egalitarian premise. **To the C Streeters, Christianity is all about elites. They pay lip service to helping the poor, but they believe the best way to help the weak is to help the strong.***

The C Street mindset has played out in political scandals involving John Ensign, Mark Sanford, and Chip Pickering. Says Sharlet:

What makes C Street and the Family so unusual in the landscape of American fundamentalism is their explicit dedication to the ruling class. Help the weak by helping the strong means tending to the interests of men such as Ensign, Sanford, and Pickering. In Ensign’s case, where C Street attempted to negotiate payments for Ensign’s mistress’s family, you see the principle of what some Family leaders call “biblical capitalism” put into practice — they bargained a price for services rendered. In Sanford’s case, they actually managed his distraught wife, instructing her to refrain from any angry words—they’d take care of reprimands—and to keep her husband sexually satisfied. And Pickering, Pickering was just tawdry—they looked the other way while he rendezvoused with his mistress, a telecom heiress, in his C Street room. Such cover ups, were, to the Family, God’s work—anything to keep their chosen ones, their “kings,” in power.

I've seen a similar mindset from conservative judges in Alabama courtrooms. After being on the short end of numerous unlawful rulings, I've found myself saying, "These judges act like they are kings. They seem to think they can ignore the actual law and rule however they please."

This mindset hardly applies only to my personal situation. We've seen it at play in the Don Siegelman case, the Paul Minor case, and other Bush-era political prosecutions. I've seen evidence of it in several domestic-relations cases, where the "elite" party receives favorable treatment--and if children have to suffer because of it . . . well, that's tough.

Jeff Sharlet, I believe, has hit on an issue that has profound implications for American society. In fact, it has the power to ruin us.

Many elites, through their own selfishness or a warped view of religion (or both), believe it is more important to keep certain "chosen ones" in powerful positions than it is to uphold our democratic principles.

This kind of thinking, if unchecked, could lead to a disaster that will make 9-11 seem tame by comparison. As awful as 9-11 was, America has shown a remarkable ability to recover from it. But if we fail to see that our society is rotting from the inside . . . well, there might be no way to recover from that.

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The Family: Secret Fundamentalism at the Heart of American Power [article link](#) MMr

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Thursday, November 18, 2010

David DeGraw: The People against Wall Street

The People against Wall Street: The Fed's Quantitative Easing Violates the Rule of Law

We Need A Rally To Restore The Rule Of Law And/Or The Constitution

by David DeGraw [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 16, 2010 | AmpedStatus | Global Research

The Federal Reserve represents global banking interests who have overstepped their legal authority. Their Quantitative Easing program is an explicit violation of the Constitution. By deliberately devaluing the dollar and causing the price of basic necessities to rise, the Federal Reserve is, as a matter of strategic policy, sacrificing a significant percentage of the US population for the benefit of a few global bankers. In the process, they are also igniting a global currency war that threatens the security of the American people. In clear terms, the Federal Reserve's actions represent a declaration of war against the people of the United States.

Now that comedians like Glenn Beck, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert have demonstrated the ability to rally thousands of Americans, don't you think it's time to have a serious rally to restore the rule of law and the Constitution?

How much longer are we going to remain passive while global banking interests rob us of our national wealth and destroy the fabric of our society. Our nation has become a banana republic where the rule of law has become a farce and clearly doesn't apply to one-tenth of one percent of the population. Anyone who has been paying attention realizes that an [organized criminal operation](#) has taken over the United States.

The collapse of the housing market was the result of organized criminal activity, from top to bottom. The people who committed the largest financial crime in the history of the United States were rewarded with trillions of dollars in national wealth, and continue to be rewarded as this criminal activity continues unabated.

In an attempt to drive the final nail into our coffin, five members of the Supreme Court have blatantly proven that they are beholden to these interests by ruling in favor of unlimited spending on political campaigns, which allows for a grotesque abuse of power and firmly entrenches the banking interests that have seized our nation. These banking interests have paid-off, or legally [sic] bribed, the majority of our elected officials and leaders of both parties, leaving 99% of the American population without representation.

The longer we allow them to get away with it, the more emboldened the global banking cartel is becoming. Let's look at their latest scam...

Quantitative Fleecing: The Backdoor Bailout & Hidden Tax

On top of the many crimes already committed, their latest swindle is the Federal Reserve's Quantitative Easing (QE2) program. QE2 is a money printing scheme that is in direct violation of the Constitution. The Constitution explicitly gives fiscal authority to Congress. The Federal Reserve, as a group of unelected global banking interests, cannot enact this policy without the direct approval of Congress. Therefore, Congress must take immediate action to stop this illegal activity, yet they remain completely silent on this usurpation of power.

As Hussman Funds president John Hussman [politely put it](#):

"Given that fiscal authority is enumerated by the Constitution as the sole right of Congress, and spending is prohibited by the Constitution without explicit appropriation, it seems clear - regardless of how the Federal Reserve Act is written - that

monetary operations involving anything but Treasury securities contain unconstitutional 'fiscal component,' unless they involve repurchase agreements that would make the Fed whole even if the underlying securities were to fail. It is doubtful that when Congress drafted the Federal Reserve Act to allow the use of mortgage-backed securities, it ever dreamed that the Fed would purchase these securities outright when the issuer was insolvent. Until this issue is clarified in legislation, Bernanke will continue to see it as 'perfectly sensible' for the Fed to make 'money financed gifts' that substitute his own personal discretion for those of a democracy.

Equally disturbing is that Bernanke apparently has no problem confusing fiscal policy with monetary policy when it suits him."

The Federal Reserve tells us that they are doing this QE2 program to stimulate the economy and create jobs. Any serious economist will tell you that this is a blatant lie. We know from a basic understanding of economics and the results of QE1 that this program is completely ineffective in accomplishing their stated goals. The Federal Reserve is deliberately devaluing the dollar to enrich a small group of a global bankers, which will cause significant harm to the people of the United States and severe ramifications throughout the world. Their actions are igniting a global currency and trade war that is endangering the security of the United States. The Department of Homeland Security should take immediate actions to protect us against these acts of financial terrorism, and that's not a joke.

The Federal Reserve's actions are already causing the price of food and gas to increase and will cause hyperinflation on most [basic necessities](#). This is happening at a time when we have a [record 52 million](#) Americans living in poverty, [42.4 million on food stamps](#) and [77 percent](#) of the population now living paycheck to paycheck. By deliberately devaluing the dollar and causing the price of necessities to rise, the Federal Reserve is, as a matter of strategic policy, sacrificing a significant percentage of the US population for the benefit of a few bankers - bankers who have already been experiencing all-time record high bonuses over the past two years. This is why we now have the highest and most severe inequality of wealth in US history. Not even the robber barons looted the economy as effectively as these banksters have.

Bill Gross, the head of the world's largest mutual fund PIMCO, has said he expects the Fed's QE2 program to cause a [20% decline](#) in the value of the dollar. That may sound like an exaggeration to you, but many analysts are predicating an even more severe decline in value, and given the current global economic environment, with currency wars escalating, the very existence of the dollar is threatened like never before.

The bottom line is that this QE2 program amounts to a 20% tax increase for all Americans. They are not only taking an additional 20% of our annual salary, they are also taking 20% of all the money that we have in the bank. This is a backdoor bailout, a hidden tax, a way for working Americans to pay for the crimes of Wall Street. A way to cover the fraudulent toxic debt that they created in their casino Ponzi scheme that destroyed the economy in the first place.

This is the essence of taxation without representation.

We let them get away with the corrupted bailout. We let them get away QE1, which already stole 10% of our money last year. So now they are back at it, getting even bolder in their disregard for the American people and the Constitution.

The Federal Reserve represents global banking interests who have overstepped their legal authority and explicitly violated the Constitution. In clear terms, their actions represent a declaration of war against the people of the United States. The Federal Reserve Bank and [their primary dealers](#) are officially enemies of the state.

Make no mistake, Ben Bernanke is Public Enemy #1.

He represents the interests of the people who have brought overwhelming poverty and economic hardship to our doorstep. When are we going to hold him accountable for his actions?

All elected officials, civil servants and US military service members have sworn an oath to uphold and protect the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. If Congress does not act, they will be derelict in their duties and we will have the legal authority to defend our rights. As American citizens we have a duty to protect the interests of the American people.

I am not calling for anyone to break the law. I'm demanding actions to restore the rule of law. I'm exercising my first amendment right to publicly point out that in the absence of political representation, we have an obligation to take non-violent direct action to restore the rule of law and the Constitution of the United States.

The Road Ahead...

The looting of the US economy that has occurred over the past two years is unprecedented in American history. You don't have trillions of dollars looted from the economy and go on living business as usual. Most Americans have only a vague understanding of the collapse that we have been set up for. If you think the past two years were bad, and obviously they were, they were just a warm up to what is coming our way. After analyzing the policies in place and the current political environment, I can assure you that the next two years will be worse than the previous two.

As scary as it is to admit, I must conclude that we are only in the beginning phase of our decline. Millions more will be driven into poverty and unemployment. As this prolonged crisis continues the social safety-nets, like unemployment insurance and food stamps, the social safety-nets that have held our society together, will breakdown. Cuts to these vital social programs are going to be severe across the board. Draconian measures are just beginning to be rolled out in state after state across the country.

If you want to know where we are headed, a recent Boston Globe article by [James Carroll](#) shined a light on our dark future by revealing a well-established recent trend:

"... as federal corrections budgets increased by \$19 billion, money for housing was cut by \$17 billion, 'effectively making the construction of prisons the nation's main housing program for the poor.' State budgets took their cues from Washington in a new but unspoken national consensus: poverty itself was criminalized. Although 'law and order' was taken to be a Republican mantra, this phenomenon was fully bipartisan."

We already have more citizens in prison than any other country in the world. Our per capita incarceration rate is now on par to the darkest days of the [Soviet Gulag](#).

What do you think is going to happen when the 52 million Americans already living in poverty can no longer afford to get the food that they need to live?

Unless there is a major shift in political policy, riots and social upheaval are coming. The mainstream media created bubble of reality that we have been all comfortably living in is about to burst. You need to prepare yourself for it.

Until we stop being so naïve and passive and realize that our country has been taken over by a financial terrorism network, until we demand that the rule of law is actually applied, our living standards will continue on the downward spiral that has only just begun.

You may think I'm be overly pessimistic or extreme, but I'm not. Open your own eyes, it doesn't take much intelligence to see what is happening around us, it just takes some time to do the research and connect the dots. Turn off your TV set. Go online and look at what is happening throughout the world. People are taking to the streets and fighting back all over the world, and I'm not talking about in some backwoods country that you've never even heard of. Look at Europe, people are storming their government offices and departments of finance. They understand what is happening and they are defending their future. When will we?

Americans across the country are waking up completely broke, in debt they will never get out of and their job prospects are dire. The wrecking ball came through once and drove 50 million Americans into poverty. It is about to swing back again and take with it another 50 million of us. Our country has been attacked, looted and burnt to the ground economically.

We need to understand that we are in an all out economic world war right now, and we are being viciously attacked without forming any resistance.

The people attacking us are only one-tenth of one percent of the population. If we can recognize this fact and organize on common ground, we can win this war.

Are you ready to fight back?

I've made my decision. See you on the frontlines!

David DeGraw is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Wednesday, November 17, 2010

[Joshua Holland: Seriously, Jail the Bankers or This Economy Will Never Fully Recover](#)

Seriously, Jail the Bankers or This Economy Will Never Fully Recover

By Joshua Holland [article link](#)

November 17, 2010 | AlterNet

The Great Recession showed the world that the crimes that create the most victims are not committed by terrorists, gangbangers or drug traffickers, but by well-heeled crooks in Wall Street's executive suites. Tens of millions of people have seen their jobs disappear and their pension funds fleeced, and had their homes taken out from under their feet as a result of the crash of Wall Street's Great Casino. Yet so far, the culprits have been given little more than a slap on the wrist.

Failing to prosecute Wall Street's high-flying crooks doesn't only represent a great miscarriage of justice. Powerful voices within the economic establishment are now making the case that holding the bankers criminally culpable is necessary if we ever hope to stop our national economy from moving from one speculation-driven bubble to the next.

Nobel-prize winner Joe Stiglitz recently told AOL's [Daily Finance](#) that major damage resulting from the financial disaster "has not really been taken on board, and that is confidence in our legal system, in our rule of law, in our system of justice." His prescription? "I think we ought to go do what we did" in the wake of similar financial crises in the past, and "actually put many of these guys in prison."

His argument is based not on the visceral satisfaction of seeing the high and mighty brought down a peg, but on cold economic grounds. At heart, economics is the study of incentives, and by refusing to hold the corporate criminals at the heart of the housing crisis accountable in any meaningful way, we're creating powerful incentives for more malfeasance in the future.

As Stiglitz explained, “People have an incentive sometimes to behave badly, because they can make more money if they can cheat. If our economic system is going to work then we have to make sure that what they gain when they cheat is offset by a system of penalties.” With those penalties amounting to a small 5 percent or 10 percent tax on illegal profits, what’s to stop the crooks? “You’re still sitting home pretty with your several hundred million dollars that you have left over after paying fines,” Stiglitz said.

Economist James Galbraith of the University of Texas agrees. He [told Bill Moyers](#) that at the heart of the crisis was “a huge amount of” criminal fraud, which the Bush administration and the FBI knew was occurring but didn’t prosecute. “There will have to be full-scale investigation and cleaning up of the residue of” those crimes, said Galbraith, “before you can have... a return of confidence in the financial sector. And that’s a process which needs to get underway.”

According to University of Missouri scholar (and veteran regulator) William Black, there was widespread fraud “at every step in the home finance food chain.” As Black and economist L. Randall Wray [recently wrote](#):

The appraisers were paid to overvalue real estate; mortgage brokers were paid to induce borrowers to accept loan terms they could not possibly afford; loan applications overstated the borrowers' incomes; speculators lied when they claimed that six different homes were their principal dwelling; mortgage securitizers made false [representations] and warranties about the quality of the packaged loans; credit ratings agencies were overpaid to overrate the securities sold on to investors; and investment banks stuffed collateralized debt obligations with toxic securities that were handpicked by hedge fund managers to ensure they would self destruct.

Economists talk about “moral hazard,” which basically means that people -- and institutions -- behave differently when they’re insulated from the potentially negative consequences of their actions. That moral hazard has been a fixture of our under-policed financial sector for years. A shining example of that is Citigroup, which received \$45 billion in TARP funds in addition to having another \$300 billion in bad paper taken off its books by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. But that was only the latest round; last year, the New York Times [noted](#) that over the past 80 years, “the United States government has engineered not one, not two, not three, but at least four rescues of the institution now known as Citigroup.”

The consequences of being able to tap the public treasury when private firms near the brink of collapse are predictable. Indeed, in 1993 another Nobel Prize-winning economist, George Akerlof, teamed with Paul Romer, a renowned expert on economic growth, to study the root causes of the 1980s savings and loan crisis. The New York Times [summarized](#) their findings last year, writing that the crisis resulted from investors having “borrowed huge amounts of money, made big profits when times were good and then [leaving] the government holding the bag for their eventual (and predictable) losses.”

In a word, the investors looted. Someone trying to make an honest profit, Professors Akerlof and Romer said, would have operated in a completely different manner. The investors displayed a “total disregard for even the most basic principles of lending,” failing to verify standard information about their borrowers or, in some cases, even to ask for that information.

The investors “acted as if future losses were somebody else’s problem,” the economists wrote. “They were right.”

At the time, Akerlof predicted that the next opportunity for the bankers to loot hundreds of billions from the treasury would come in “an obscure little market called credit derivatives.”

When it comes to criminal activity, there is a more fundamental hazard: that potential loss of faith in our justice system. Stiglitz called it “collateral damage” from Wall Street’s crash, noting that “people aren’t sure that we have justice for all. Somebody is caught for a minor drug offense, they are sent to prison for a very long time. And yet, these so-called white-collar crimes, which are not victimless, almost none of these guys, almost none of them, go to prison.”

Even in the S and L crisis that Akerlof and Romer studied, those who perpetrated fraud didn’t get off with a mere fine. As financial reporter Zach Carter [noted](#), “During the savings and loan crisis, more than 1,100 bankers went to jail for fraud.” But, he added, “for some reason, the top brass at today’s SEC seems to think that it’s very important to bring these cases against companies, so long as the perpetrators get to walk away.”

James Galbraith echoed that point, telling Bill Moyers that “the overwhelming emphasis, in the [Obama] administration's program, I think, has been to return things to a condition of normalcy, to use a 1920s word, that prevailed five and 10 years ago.”

It's a matter of enormous social consequence to see justice done in the wake of Big Finance's serious crimes. But the takeaway from some of our leading economic experts is that doing so also serves a vitally important economic end; if we don't punish the guilty, we'll never fully recover from the collapse of Wall Street's house of cards.

Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet. He is the author of [The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy \(and Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America\)](#). Drop him an [email](#) or follow him on [Twitter](#).

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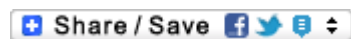
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Ruling on Behalf of Wall Street's "Super Rich": The Financial End Time has Arrived

by Prof. Michael Hudson [article link](#)

November 16, 2010 | Global Research

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [12:57 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

David Michael Green: The Religion of Politics

The Religion of Politics

by David Michael Green [article link](#)

November 17, 2010 | CommonDreams

This is not an article about the politics of religion.

Mostly, anyhow.

This is an article about the religion of politics. And the harm it does to our country. And - since we're a big fat superpower - the harm it does to the world.

By 'religion of politics', I don't really mean religion at all. Religion is, without question, the greatest disaster to plague humanity, and that's just on one of its good days. But that's not what I'm talking about here. I'm talking about, instead, the manner in which too many of us do our politics. I'm talking about how too many of us (which is to say any number above zero) approach politics like we approach religion.

Fundamentally, it seems to me there are two basic ways in which we can seek to comprehend our world: the empirical or the assumptive. The scientific or the faith-based. The (roughly speaking) cognitive or the emotional.

I know its fashionable in our time to try to reconcile the two, to say that science has its domain and religion has its. But that's rubbish. The truth is that they are competing modalities for engaging life and the environment in which it dwells. On any given matter, one can make a judgement based on evidence and logic, or you can take a position based on what you prefer to believe. Those two approaches apply to every question ranging from the existence of god to whether the US should invade Iraq (and those who answered the latter affirmatively should count themselves lucky that the former answer is negative).

Of course, there are rarely if ever fully 'correct' answers to any of these questions in any abstract sense. But there is an investigatory process that will get you as close to the 'correct answer' - or a best functioning approximation - as is humanly possible, and then there is an alternative approach, called 'let's all pretend'. The first path may not get you where you want to be, but the second one is almost sure not to. The first approach may not solve your problems, but the second is almost guaranteed to exacerbate them.

This is not exactly a new observation, of course. The Founders of the American state were profoundly men of the first category, as leading figures in the Enlightenment, a movement which practically defined itself over the principle of rejecting superstition and assumption in favor of rational analysis. For all the faults that would later be attributed (some rightly, most wrongly) to rationality, science and Enlightenment thinking, this cognitive sea change marks one of the greatest moments of the entire human story. I see it as the adolescence of humankind.

The Enlightenment approach is also, among other things, at the very foundation of the idea of democracy. First because it gives humans license to control their own destiny. And second because there is, after all, no point to the concept of self-rule by the people if the body politic is ill-equipped to make thoughtful decisions.

America faces so many huge problems in our time. But I see none as consequential as the fact that our body politic is indeed ill-equipped to make thoughtful decisions. We are fast losing the capacity for anything even approximating dispassionate empirical observation and rational analysis. Ultimately, this will mark the greatest of the many triumphs of the dark forces of regressivism - to regress us as a society to a pre-Enlightenment modality in our relationship with our world. To push us back three hundred or more years, to a time when 'knowledge' was given, fixed and dogmatically defended. Or worse - when even questioning such ideas would itself be considered heretical if not absurd.

This is the greatest victory that the right can win - to discredit, disdain and destroy heterodoxy, to elevate unquestioned and unquestionable authority to the supreme power of popularly-enforced social convention, and to ultimately destroy the societal value and even the capacity for critical thinking. If you want to plunder, unfettered by resistance or even the legitimacy of challenge, you must not only remove the questions from the table, you must take away the table as well. You want to turn the art of independent, rational analysis into the political equivalent of something esoteric, like ancient Tibetan calligraphy. Practiced by lepers.

This is the America we live in today, or at least the one we're fast headed toward.

On election night earlier this month, I sat in doing analysis of the returns on a Long Island radio station. With me was a very personable, well-informed (by conventional standards) guy who holds a significant position in local government, and who told me that he had been asked to run for Congress this year, but declined because he has a small child at home. At one point in the broadcast, I mentioned that it was absurd to call Barack Obama a liberal, let alone a socialist. At the next break, he good-naturedly teased me for saying that, as if I hadn't really believed it, but was just trying to do a little liberal propaganda work. I looked at him and said, "I'm dead serious. I can name ten examples of right-wing policy from this White House. Can you name three examples of liberalism?" His face fell a bit. I said, "Okay, how about one?" Then he sort of uncomfortably laughed and said, "You know you're never going to get me to believe that!"

As a matter of fact, he had no idea how much I knew I was never going to convince him to believe that. I knew I wasn't because I've come to see over the last decade how the regressive mind (I'm being generous in my nomenclature here) works (again). It is not only increasingly incapable of rational thought, it is increasingly defined by that incapacity. It is characterized by the pre-Enlightenment tribal mentality in which our team is always good and right, and 'facts' are either accepted dogmatically, rejected out of hand, or just plain fabricated out of whole cloth to service that desperately held weltanschauung.

It is a frightening world, precisely because it is so frightened a world. The people who inhabit it are so uncomfortable with the real world that they have created a bogus one to which they tenaciously cling. The vociferousness with which they demand Fake World's hegemony over others is anything but an indicator of their confidence in the power of its principles. Quite to the contrary, that obstreperousness represents instead an inadvertent indication of the falsity of their beliefs, of the brittle precariousness of a world view that possesses all the solidity of cotton candy, and of the urgent requirement for total

vigilance in order to keep the dogs of cognitive dissonance well at bay. To paraphrase Jefferson (who knew a thing or two about cognitive dissonance): It is error alone which needs the support of ideology. Truth can stand by itself.

Truth is a big problem for the right. A really big problem. And, regrettably, it is increasingly becoming a really big problem for America.

This is a country that just elected a government which - for the third major iteration in a single generation - is once again promising radical tax cuts for the wealthy and a balanced budget at the same time. How willfully stupid do you have to be to believe that that little exercise will turn out differently this time than it did when Reagan instead tripled the national debt, or Lil' Bush doubled it?

And how intentionally ignorant do you have to be to continue to take right-wing economic policy at face value anymore, anyhow? Thirty years ago, Reagan's OMB director, David Stockman, told us to our faces that the whole trickle down line was pure bullshit, used for the purpose of justifying tax cuts for the wealthy to moronic voters. And yet we pretended like we never actually saw what was behind the curtain Toto pulled aside. And still we pretend, even as we've now lived through - and lived with the consequences of - the greatest transfer of wealth in all of human history, a massive looting of the middle class, working class and poor alike, all to benefit the already fantastically wealthy. So just what kind of fervently-held political religion must you desperately be clinging to in order to still take the economic policy pronouncements of a John Boehner or a Dick Arney seriously in the year 2010?

Or how about foreign policy? Paul Wolfowitz - a reptilian combination of academic aloofness and lethal arrogance not seen on the American stage since Henry Kissinger cashed it all in for the money - played the role of George Bush's David Stockman. The son of a bitch came right out and told us to our faces that the whole WMD riff was nothing less than a Madison Avenue marketing campaign of epic proportions. Then the Downing Street Memos confirmed that truth with leaked evidence from the highest levels of the British and American governments. And yet we nod and yawn today as a proven war criminal now tours the country hawking ridiculously deceitful lies in the form of a presidential memoir, to cover ridiculously destructive prior lies in the form of a government, and one which, for that matter, only came into being on the basis of ridiculously ominous earlier lies in the form of the conservative cabal on the US Supreme Court. But, hey, it's only millions of lives at stake. Why bother noticing?

These are only the most glaring and prominent examples. The list is endless. We continue to flatter ourselves with the idiotic mantra that we are the greatest thing to happen to the planet since Rome, even while just about every statistic measuring the health and well-being of societies show us rapidly becoming a banana republic. But you can't say that in America today. It's heresy. We have a religion to protect.

It's bad enough for a society to make the wrong decisions, particularly since the effects can be devastating. But what makes our present situation especially hopeless is that we continue to insist on making decisions the wrong way. That approach to policy making, and indeed to reckoning the very world we inhabit, will almost always guarantee disaster. Go ahead and believe if you want that Jesus will save you from losing your suburban, white-collar, big-screen HDTV existence, but that don't make it so, pal. The guy couldn't even save himself, and then he hasn't bothered to show his face on the planet for more than 2,000 years now. Not even for the Thirty Years' War, when Catholics and Protestants annihilated each other, to the tune of about eight or ten million dead Christian souls.

Religious zealots love to note that there are no atheists in foxholes. They're probably right, but it always struck me as hilarious the degree to which that truth undermines rather than affirms such attempts to bolster their insecurities about the fantasies to which they adhere. Of course there are no atheists in foxholes. That's because mortally frightened humans will cling to any superstition, any cosmic parental savior figure, any super-hero, any deus ex machina, or any hasty bargain they can strike promising to forego this or that vice in order to save their skinny asses from molten hot chunks of lead whizzing toward their soft fleshy bodies at petrifyingly scary velocities.

You bet they're praying for some god or another to save them, just as the wounded ones all cry out for "Mama" before they die. Of course there are no atheists in foxholes. That only confirms that people will do or believe anything if you frighten them badly enough. What's more clarifying is the fact that there are no true believers on surgeon's tables. Oh, sure, they're

praying still. But if they really believed in their prayers, and their deity, they wouldn't be going in for surgery at all. Surely god is skilled and powerful enough to just heal our owies without having to work through doctors, right? And wouldn't it be so much better that way, anyhow? Think of the months of painful post-op recovery you could skip. Or all the bad television watched from your hospital bed you could avoid. Or the interminable hassles of trying to get your insurance company to actually pay what it owes. Does god really only work through Anthem Blue Cross?

Unfortunately, though, when it comes to politics, there are a lot of true believers. That is because of the luxury of time intervening between cause and effect, I suppose. When the doc says you've got cancer and you need to have surgery or you're gonna die, you check into the hospital like yesterday. But when scientists say that global warming is going to wreck the planet over the next half century, you can pretend it ain't so, especially because you know it surely means that some Washington bureaucrat is gonna come take away your freakin' Hummer. I imagine we'd act quite differently if the damage that global warming is slated to inflict upon us was going to be delivered instead by an asteroid. Oh, we'd pray like mad in our little planetary foxhole, to be sure. But first we'd get every scientist we could - you know, like climatologists - and put them to work finding a solution to save our butts.

But global warming ain't fast-moving, like an asteroid. So, instead, we allow pigs like Rush Limbaugh - locked in an endless attempt to purge all the bad memories of the bullying they endured as children - to engorge themselves at the expense of a charred planet, just as we engorge ourselves by following their lead rather than an academy full of expert climatologists. When I encounter the selfish and willfully stupid idiots who subscribe to this transparently filthy set of lies used to cover up transparently evil levels of greed, I just want to shake them by the shoulders and ask whether they'd also let Limbaugh perform their open heart surgeries as well? You know, given his vast scientific expertise on things like climatology and medicine and so on...

Our problem today runs much deeper - frighteningly deeper - than our problems. Endless wars, economic depression, environmental collapse - these are actually the good news, relatively speaking. The (very) bad news is not that we have these catastrophic crises to deal with, or even that they are all coming home to roost simultaneously, but, rather, that we have regressed back to a medieval modality for grappling with the world we inhabit. We are rapidly returning to a culture of faith, instead of one of reason. Or, put differently, we are giving up on the painful but potentially productive struggles of early adulthood to return instead to the comforts of being children.

This week, Jonah Goldberg, right-wing liar (pardon the redundancy) published a piece in which he trashed the (not really Christian, not really white, not really American) president for not embracing the idea of American exceptionalism with sufficient fervor. He quoted Obama. But, of course, he left out all kinds of other parts of what Obama said - in the exact same answer to the exact same question - that directly and completely contradicted his assertion that Obama doesn't really believe in the greatness of the country he is (supposed to be) leading. Things like "I'm enormously proud of my country and its role and history in the world". Or, "The United States remains the largest economy in the world. We have unmatched military capability. And I think that we have a core set of values that are enshrined in our Constitution, in our body of law, in our democratic practices, in our belief in free speech and equality, that, though imperfect, are exceptional."

This stuff goes on all the time. Basically, with regressives, if their lips are moving, they are lying. The great wonder, of course is why do people like Goldberg and Limbaugh and Beck and Bush and Palin have a voice, let alone such prominence, in what is supposed to be a grown-up, sophisticated democracy? Why do we accord them legitimacy, while disdaining and jailing pedophiles or drug dealers who do far less damage? How can a country which once achieved so much now revel so joyously in the stench of its own soiled diapers?

Beats me, man. Ah, but let's give credit where it is due. Goldberg is right. There is such a thing as American exceptionalism, after all.

Think about how exceptional you have to be to take the pioneering political, economic, human rights and technological great power of the twentieth century and return it all the way back to the Dark Ages.

And think about how truly exceptional you have to be to do so in the name of the American Founders, whose entire raison d'être was to transcend the superstitions of those times, and replace them with the empiricism and reason of the Enlightenment.

That's a beautiful sight, if only in the sheer boldness of its scope and its gall.

Yep. America the beautiful.

America the exceptional.

Praise god.

David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. He is delighted to receive readers' reactions to his articles (<mailto:dmg@regressiveantidote.net>), but regrets that time constraints do not always allow him to respond. More of his work can be found at his [website](#).

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Tuesday, November 16, 2010

[Ralph Nader: Bush At Large](#)

Bush At Large

by Ralph Nader [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 16, 2010 | Ralph Nader | CommonDreams

George W. Bush is on a roll-a money roll with a \$7 million advance for his book Decision Points and a rehabilitation roll to paint his war crimes as justifiable mass-slaughter and torture.

His carefully chosen interviewers-NBC's Matt Lauer and Oprah Winfrey-agreed to a safe pre-taping to avoid demonstrations and tough questions. Requests for him to speak are pouring in from business conventions and other rich assemblages willing to pay \$200,000 for "the Decider's" banalities. This is "Shrub's" month in the sun. In his first week of book promotion, he was asked about anything he would have done had he known then what he knew now-especially regarding Iraq and its encircled dictator. Well, he deplored receiving "false intelligence" about Saddam Hussein having weapons of mass destruction which was one of several false claims he fed the American people before invading Iraq in 2003. But he has no regrets, saying that "the world was undoubtedly safer with Saddam gone."

But was it safer for over a million Iraqis who lost their lives due to the invasion, over 4 million refugees, 4500 American soldiers lost, 1100 amputees, tens of thousands injured, sick and tens of thousands more GIs coming back with trauma to lost jobs, broken families and permanent damage to their health.

Was it worth a trillion dollars to blow apart the country of Iraq and incur many more enemies? Was it worth starting a war paid for by a massive debt handed to our children so that George W. and Dick Cheney could give themselves and their rich buddies a massive tax cut? Ex-presidents possess self-excusing delusions, but this is *non compos mentis* run amuck.

Then there is his escape from legal sanctions because the law enforcers in the Justice Department act as if Bush and Dick Cheney are above the law. "What is Attorney General Holder waiting for," declared conservative/libertarian former Judge Andrew Napolitano, the legal analyst for Fox News, adding that Holder should criminally prosecute both Bush and Cheney

for their many crimes. Just as a Justice Department task force was about to do to Richard Nixon after he resigned his office in 1974, for far lesser crimes, when President Ford pardoned him.

I asked Bruce Fein, an associate deputy attorney general under Ronald Reagan, constitutional rights litigator, author of books and articles and many Congressional testimonies on the imperial presidency, and its unlawful penchant for Empire, for his reaction. Here is his response:

"Former President Bush's selective memoir is a little like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. With the exception of authorizing waterboarding, a form of torture, Bush neglects his serial vandalizing of the Constitution and the federal criminal code: five years of illegal surveillances of Americans on American soil; a war against Iraq without proper authorization by Congress; illegal detentions of enemy combatants without accusation or trials; hundred of unconstitutional signing statements professing an intent to refuse to faithfully execute the laws; unconstitutional defiance of congressional subpoenas; and, employing unilateral executive agreements to circumvent the treaty authority of the Senate over military commitments."

"Despite his constitutional literacy, President Obama has balked at faithful execution of the laws against torture, warrantless spying on Americans, or obstruction of justice perpetrated by Bush and his servile minions. On that score, Obama resembles President Nixon, who was impeached by the House Judiciary Committee and forced to resign for sneering at his constitutional obligation to enforce, not ignore the laws.

"If Obama believes exculpatory circumstances justify non-prosecution of Bush-Cheney," Fein continued, "then he should pardon them as authorized by the Constitution. A pardon must be accepted by the recipient to be effective, and acknowledges guilt and the inviolability of the rule of law. Ignoring lawlessness at the highest levels like Obama wounds the rule of law, and creates a precedent that lies around like a loaded weapon ready to destroy the Constitution. Obama himself is thus violating his oath of office by nonfeasance."

Lawyer Fein is not referring to a one time episode like Watergate but a recurrent, pattern of massive outlawry here and abroad stretching for years. In 2005-2006, the large and very conservative American Bar Association, led by its then president, corporate attorney, Michael Greco, convened three task forces that produced white papers documenting three patterns of Bush's unconstitutional behavior. Mr. Fein served on the panel that condemned the outpourings of Presidential signing statements. Although addressed and sent to President Bush, the ABA received no response to these unprecedented condemnations.

Our legal system and Constitution touted as the greatest in the world, decay when we allow epidemics of grave violations by the President and other White House violators to be rewarded for their unconstitutionality and criminality.

On Armistice Day, November 11, 2010, The Washington Post put on page one the excruciating, but brave struggle of quadruple amputee, Marine Cpl. Todd A Nicely trying to make the best of his surviving an explosive device in Afghanistan. On the reverse page two there was a picture of a smiling George W. Bush signing his book. He is getting away with it.

Holding Bush/Cheney accountable by the soldiers he sent to kill and die in illegal wars, with few exceptions such as the Military Families Speak Out (MFSO.org) and the Iraq Veterans Against the War (ivaw.org) and Veterans for Peace (veteransforpeace.org) are not being made in public by enough soldiers after their service. Many know who was responsible but under pressure from their superiors and not wanting, along with their families, to admit publically that they suffered and fought in vain, they remain silent. With their credibility, more of them need to exert real patriotism and speak out against the militant White House draft-dodgers and their neo-con advisors who drove them and our country into these boomeranging, destructive wars.

The Post completed this grim trilogy with a full page color ad by the profitable munitions manufacturer, Lockheed Martin, which taxpayers paid for, thanking the "commitment" and "sacrifice" of those who are serving today in America's military forces.

For the political cowards and their corporate profiteers, wars do not demand their sacrifice, they only invite their manipulative flattery. Same old racket, recalling double Congressional Medal of Honor winner, Marine General Smedley Butler whose book "War Is A Racket" said it all decades ago.

Of course more members of another profession should declare itself for prosecution-the one million-strong licensed attorneys sworn to uphold the law as "officers of the court"!

Ralph Nader is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His most recent book - and first novel - is, [Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us](#). His most recent work of non-fiction is [The Seventeen Traditions](#).

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Charles Sullivan: When Fascism Masquerades as Populism

When Fascism Masquerades as Populism

By Charles Sullivan [article link](#)

November 15, 2010 | Information Clearing House

With its reliance on corporate money and financial contributions by the wealthy, the U.S. electoral system provides movement in only one direction: to the right. Traditional liberals lack the financial wherewithal to compete against free market fundamentalists. Corporations do not fund candidates who would regulate them and hold them accountable to the people. The electoral system is useless as a tool for the expression of traditional liberalism or progressive reform.

Capitalism does not empower people; it gives primacy to capital. Like the corporation, money is a legal fiction that allows bankers and financial institutions to create phantom wealth from nothing. It gives rise to privatized banking cartels and to the Federal Reserve which controls the money supply and loans it at interest to the government and to people. In effect, this gives bankers control of the government and our cultural institutions.

Free market fundamentalism was elevated to the status of religion decades ago by Milton Friedman and his disciples at the Chicago School of Economics. Its adherents regard the market as a holy oracle that takes precedence over man and nature, the diviner of social and economic status, a force more primal than the laws that govern the motion of planetary bodies and the formation of distant nebulae.

But like the phantom wealth it engenders, the existence of free markets is utter fiction. Not only are the precepts of market fundamentalism contradicted by nature; they are restrained by her. With a hunger for god-like power, capitalism and free market fundamentalism are, in fact, puny forces that are dwarfed by those of nature to which they will ultimately succumb.

Due in part to its infatuation with a particularly virulent form of capitalism, the U.S. has been descending toward fascism for decades. The persistent stream of neoconservative statesmen, stateswomen, and corporatists are the product of a corporate-funded counter-revolution that gained ascendancy during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, if not before. The counter-revolution is undoing all of the social and economic gains won through popular struggle and resistance.

Every social program that does not promote the religion of market fundamentalism is under siege: social security, pensions, public education, unemployment benefits, the minimum wage, Medicare and Medicaid, as well as the public infrastructure, are in danger of eradication or privatization.

This is the agenda of the right-wing extremists of the two major political parties who have ascended to power by adhering to, and promulgating, the theocracy of free market fundamentalism. Traditional liberalism has always acted as a bulwark against this and other regressive ideologies. But now it is politically extinct. Traditional liberalism has given way to the ultra-conservative philosophy of neoliberalism.

As a result of the ascendancy of neoliberalism, enlightened people can no longer associate traditional liberalism with the Democratic Party. The majority of democrats are only moderately less extreme than their republican counterparts. For instance, Hillary Clinton, a neoliberal, is a passionate supporter of Zionism. She advocates imperial war and occupation. Clinton is a free market fundamentalist, as is virtually every member of Congress. Her political philosophy is practically indistinguishable from that of Barack Obama and Karl Rove.

Preoccupied with the procurement of corporate funds, politicians are oblivious to the plight of struggling workers, the chronically unemployed, and the under-employed. No legislator holding high office acknowledges the existence of an underclass that is condemned to exist in despair and poverty. The underclass has no voice, no representation, and no power. It is too preoccupied with survival to rebel.

In contrast to the specter of the underclass, the 2010 mid-term elections saw more than a billion dollars invested in it. That figure is only going to increase as political favors are auctioned to the highest bidder. With each election the nation moves further to the right and a step closer to fascism. The system does not offer a means of turning back.

As long as capital drives the electoral process, liberal influence will continue to wane. It has been so long since the American public has seen a genuine liberal that they have forgotten what one looks like. It is absurd for anyone to associate Barack Obama with progressive politics, much less call him a socialist. As his record demonstrates, President Obama is a devout capitalist, a disciple of Milton Friedman, and a pious free market fundamentalist. He is Ronald Reagan incarnate. Those who were hypnotized by his hyperbole should have known better.

The corporations that finance political campaigns will not permit reform. Fortunes are made by maintaining the status quo, by promoting war, and by curtailing civil liberties in the name of national defense. They are made by imposing austerity upon working class people and by privatizing the public domain. This is the final frontier open to capitalist exploitation.

Like capitalism itself, the electoral system perpetuates social and economic disparity; it advocates imperial war and colonization; it fosters the privatization of the public domain; and it promotes economic serfdom and debt peonage as free market democracy.

Government-imposed austerity on working people has set the stage for the emergence of radical fascists. Aggressively promoted by the commercial media, Rand Paul in Kentucky, Christine Donnelly in Delaware, and Sarah Palin in Alaska provide recent examples of emerging American fascism. These kooks and simpletons are an expression of right-wing corporatism masquerading as working class populism. Their deferential followers are not wise enough to know the difference. They are only the beginning of far worse things to come.

The legendary free market, the Holy Grail of capitalism, is wrongly equated with democracy. It liberates people from their souls and transforms them into serfs. Market fundamentalism is reified and exalted by the commercial media and the corporate state. Far from benefiting working people, the spread of this belligerent ideology will ensure the demise of the American Republic, and it will take down much of the world with it in violent military conflagration.

While operating within the capitalist system, liberals have traditionally sought to hold corporations in check and to diminish their power through regulation. By contrast, conservatives, neoconservatives, civil libertarians, and neoliberals are working to increase corporate influence because they have a financial stake in the outcome.

The working class people who have created this nation's wealth used to be associated with liberalism, often in the form of Socialism and Communism, which rightly sought to end capitalism. Traditional liberals recognize that working people are not commodities. They are not corporate property. They have more to offer than their labor and their blood.

Contrary to the maxims of market fundamentalism, money and the political power it buys is not of divine origin. Neither is it just or humane. Social capital, investing in people and human networks, provides the means of our salvation. But it must be organized and it must act in solidarity with all working class interests in all parts of the world at all times.

This comes very close to the Wobbly's notion of "One Big Union" that was once a powerful organizing force here and abroad. Global worker solidarity, the public ownership of capital, and revolutionary unionism is a rational response to corporate globalization and market fundamentalism. This affords the best way to create equal opportunity, provide full employment, and to promote peace. Moneyless economies must evolve to serve the needs of all people, and they should operate in harmony with nature. Local currencies that are based on barter should replace the dollar.

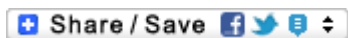
No working man or woman should fall to their knees and worship at the blood-soaked altar of capitalism. This is where false populism and its regressive ideology of market fundamentalism inevitably lead. History provides countless examples, but we must be able to learn from them. America is not the first nation to go down this path.

If the citizenry wants a representative government, one that safeguards human welfare from corporate depredation, we must recognize that the state and federal electoral system does not provide the means of meeting our needs. Saturated in corporate money, it can only carry us toward fascism and a Gestapo state of violent extremism.

Despite the absurd proclamations of the Supreme Court, money is not free speech, and corporations are not people. Free markets do not exist; they are always manipulated by insiders seeking unfair advantage. History attests that capitalism is kept afloat by raiding the public treasure. The elite adore capitalism because it provides them enormous wealth and political power without having to produce anything of value. It puts them in charge of the global plantation. It makes them masters of working class people because too many of us cannot distinguish between fascism and class-conscious populism.

Charles Sullivan is a naturalist and free-lance writer residing in the hinterlands of geopolitical West Virginia

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Monday, November 15, 2010

[Robert Freeman: It's Official: Rich Declare War on the Middle Class](#)

It's Official: Rich Declare War on the Middle Class

by Robert Freeman [article link](#)

November 14, 2010 | CommonDreams

For the past thirty years the rich have been waging war on the middle class. It's been astonishingly effective, partly because it has been undeclared. But even that pretense is now being abandoned. The President's National Deficit Commission has effectively declared that the rich will now go after what is left of working and middle class wealth and will take whatever steps are necessary to seize it. If allowed to succeed, their plan will reduce Americans to a state of serfdom.

Ronald Reagan began the war on the middle class with his "supply-side" economics. Its very purpose, according to David Stockman, Reagan's Budget Director, was to transfer wealth and income upwards. It cut the marginal tax rate on the highest income earners from 75% to 35% while dramatically expanding spending for war. The results were two-fold: massive federal debt and an astonishing rise in the share of income and wealth going to those who were already the wealthiest people in the world.

The national debt quadrupled between 1980 and 1992. George W. Bush would repeat Reagan's policies and double it again between 2000 and 2008. Meanwhile, the share of national income going to the top 1% more than doubled, from 9% to 24%. The share going to the top one-tenth of 1% of income earners more than tripled. We now have the most unequal distribution of income in the developing world and the inequality is growing rapidly.

Shifts of this magnitude over such short periods of time have never been seen in American history. With the rich getting much, much richer, it means that everybody else is getting poorer. And in fact, real wages for median workers are lower today than they were in 1973. Indeed, while the inflation-adjusted income of the bottom fifth of workers fell by \$6,900 between 1979 and 2007, the top 1% saw its annual income increase by \$741,000!

To try to keep up with living standards Americans resorted to debt. They increased their personal debt-to-income ratio from 62% in 1980 to 130% in 2008. When housing prices fell 35% nationwide in the recent collapse it left Americans with a smaller share of equity in their homes, 48%, than at any time since the Great Depression. The share they have lost has been taken by the banks.

In other words, all of the income and wealth gains for middle Americans from the "golden years" between 1945 and 1975 have now been wiped out. Or more accurately, have now been transferred to the very rich. The top 1% holds 34% of the nation's wealth while the bottom 50% holds just 2.5%. The bottom 40% owns absolutely nothing.

These effects and numbers can be numbing, even dizzying. But it's important to understand that they have not been the result of random events or impersonal market forces. Rather, they have followed as the intended consequences of the relentless application of a wide array of government and industry policies.

The massive run-up in debt is one such policy. The wealthy are net lenders. This means that massive public and private debt transfers interest income to them from the rest of the economy. Another method for effecting massive wealth transfer: Beginning in 1981 the Reagan administration effectively stopped enforcing anti-trust laws, allowing monopolies to gouge everyone who had to buy their products.

The government actually provided tax subsidies so that corporations could eliminate jobs in the industrial heartland and ship them to Mexico and later, China, India, and other low-wage countries, reducing wages and pitting American workers against each other for those jobs remaining.

The bank deregulation that began in the early 1980s reached its apex with the repeal of the Depression-era Glass-Steagall Act in the late nineties. This set up the "casino capitalism" of the next decade that would spawn massive criminality and mortgage fraud by the nation's leading banks—none of which has been prosecuted. The result was the greatest economic collapse since the Great Depression.

But even as more than five million homeowners have lost their homes, the wealthy had their losses covered by the Bush and later Obama administrations. Bloomberg news estimates that the transfer to the banks through the financial bailout comes to some \$13 trillion dollars.

We could go on and on and on with the roster of ways the wealthy have used the government to transfer national wealth to themselves. Environmental and health laws that are not enforced. Deals with the pharmaceutical industry so they don't have to compete with foreign manufacturers. Health care "reform" that forces tens of millions of Americans to buy questionable insurance products, even as insurers continue to kick legitimate claimants off their rolls. Give-aways of the telecommunication spectrum worth hundreds of billions of dollars to media monopolies that ladle out state propaganda as if were news and never, ever challenge official narratives.

In these and a thousand other ways, the rich have conspired with the government they largely control to shift more and still more of the nation's wealth away from the working and middle classes, to themselves. It amounts to the most insidious class warfare and the most rapacious looting of public and private resources in the history of the world.

The result is vast impoverishment, demoralization, and the destruction of the American middle class. One out of eight Americans are on food stamps. One out of five people are in official poverty. One out of four children are raised in poverty. Twenty five million people cannot find enough work, while their skills atrophy and their families and communities are destroyed. These are not figures describing a banana republic, a disaster-stricken region, or a third world country. They describe the United States of America after three decades of plunder by the rich. And now they want to go in for the kill.

Not satisfied with the staggering wealth they have already siphoned away, the ultra-rich are now using Barack Obama's National Deficit Commission to propose even more brazen plunder. And the looting is no longer taking place behind closed doors or under the cover of arcane public policies.

The commission proposes to cut the federal government's budget deficit by \$4 trillion over the next decade. But 75% of the "savings" will come from gutting programs that help stabilize the middle class and their communities. None of it comes from policies that would harm the rich.

For example, the commission proposes cutting the tax deduction for mortgage payments. Not only will this render housing much less affordable for millions of prospective home buyers, it will reduce housing prices, perhaps substantially, for without the tax writeoff, buyers will be able to afford much less house. This will decimate the sole source of wealth of tens of millions of Americans.

It is housing wealth that undergirds retirement security for the middle class. Or, at least it did until one out of four homeowners went underwater on their mortgage in the recent bank-triggered collapse. Then, even as the Commission plans to decimate home prices and owner equity, it proposes cutting back benefits to Social Security recipients.

It would lower Social Security cost-of living adjustments while raising the minimum retirement age. And this is being proposed at the very moment that the bank-owned Federal Reserve Board is beginning to print hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out the banks from what's left of their toxic assets still held from the housing crash.

The ensuing inflation is going to destroy the value of retirement incomes at exactly the moment that 77 million baby boomers head off into retirement. It was exactly this process of money printing and bankrupting of retirees that destroyed the German middle class in the early 1920s, giving rise to Adolph Hitler.

The Commission's proposals would increase co-pays and deductibles for Medicare, making it unaffordable to millions. It proposes taxing as income the health insurance benefits millions receive from their employers. The Child Tax Credit would be eliminated as would 10% of all federal government jobs. This, at a time when more than 20% of the workforce is already underemployed and there are five workers trying for every available job.

We should be crystal clear: these policies amount to a mortal assault on what remains of middle class solvency and the democracy that a vibrant middle class makes possible.

But even as it girds up for this assault, the Commission barely touches the ultra-rich on whose boards they serve and who have gained so much over the past 30 years. And it cannot go without being said that it was these same professional predators who actually wrecked the economy, pitching it into its greatest collapse since the Great Depression.

The Commission's proposals would actually lower the maximum tax on the highest income earners, from 35% to 24%. The nominal tax rate on corporate income would fall as well, from 35% to 26%. There is nothing proposed to raise taxes after so many decades of steadily amassed wealth. No financial transactions tax (as the IMF recommends) to stanch the kind of tsunami of speculative buying and selling that brought down the economy. Such a tax would raise over \$700 billion over the next decade.

Of course, there will be no claw-backs of the trillions of dollars transferred to the rich under the phony duress of "saving the system" during the height of the financial crisis. No proposal that the cap on earnings subject to Social Security withholding should be removed. That proviso alone would raise more than half a trillion dollars over the next decade.

In fact, it is in comparison with other give-aways to the rich that the take-aways from the middle class by the Commission can be seen as so one sided and venal. Remember, they propose to save \$4 trillion over 10 years.

But the war in Iraq, which we now know was entirely premised on lies, will cost more than \$5 trillion, according to Nobel economist Joseph Stiglitz. It has proven a huge boon to the rich weapons makers, bankers, logistics companies and oil companies that Bush used to coddle as his “base.”

As mentioned above, Bloomberg news estimates that the financial bailout cost some \$13 trillion, all of it going to the very richest people on the planet. There is not a syllable in the Commission’s report proposing getting any of that back to help reduce the deficit.

Or consider the notorious Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 where fully 40% went to the top 1% of income earners. Obama once promised to overturn them but, as is his typically cowardly pattern, is now folding. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has estimated that they will cost the government more than \$18 trillion over their lifetime—four times what the Deficit Commission claims it will achieve in savings. But God forbid we should ask for even a penny of that back to help battle the deficit.

In other words, there are many, many substantial and just ways that the savings the Commission proposes to create could be secured via small contributions from those who have gamed the system and gained the most over the past three decades. But that is not the Commission’s plan. And it is in that omission that its true intent is revealed.

There is no more time for stealth, no more need for subtlety. Western capitalist economies are declining at a pace that is frightening their elite stewards and compelling such desperate, slovenly measures as the wholesale printing of money to postpone the inevitable. While Obama sings lullabies of “hope” and “change” to tranquillize the suckers out front, the rich are backing the truck up to the vault in the back, no longer even deigning to disguise the heist. And of course, why should they? They have the additional diversion of the moronic Tea Party vigilantes (“Keep the government out of my Medicare”), ever ready to cut other people’s throats to cure their own nosebleeds.

The Commission’s proposal is the most naked, undisguised declaration of class warfare possible. Its agenda is not to reduce the deficit but rather to reduce what is left of the American middle class and American workers, to a condition of servitude, of feudal peonage. Their poverty will make them docile and subservient. This will make possible the final looting of America by those whose sociopathic greed has brought it so low already. The battle over this proposal is the last bulwark against the devastation and final destruction of America. It must be fought and won or our freedom and security ceded forever. There is no other choice.

Robert Freeman writes on economics, history, and education. His earlier pieces, "[If You Want More Debt, Vote Republican](#)," and "[Obama Was Used, and is Now Used Up](#)," were also published on CommonDreams.

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[Paul Craig Roberts: American Hypocrisy: Destruction of the Constitution, Collapse of the Rule of Law](#)

American Hypocrisy: Destruction of the Constitution, Collapse of the Rule of Law

by Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 15, 2010 | Global Research | OpEdNews

Ten years of rule by the Bush and Obama regimes have seen the collapse of the rule of law in the United States. Is the American media covering this ominous and extraordinary story? No the American media is preoccupied with the rule of law in Burma (Myanmar).

The military regime that rules Burma just released from house arrest the pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. The American media used the occasion of her release to get on Burma's case for the absence of the rule of law. I'm all for the brave lady, but if truth be known, "freedom and democracy" America needs her far worse than does Burma.

I'm not an expert on Burma, but the way I see it the objection to a military government is that the government is not accountable to law. Instead, such a regime behaves as it sees fit and issues edicts that advance its agenda. Burma's government can be criticized for not having a rule of law, but it cannot be criticized for ignoring its own laws. We might not like what the Burmese government does, but, precisely speaking, it is not behaving illegally.

In contrast, the United States government claims to be a government of laws, not of men, but when the executive branch violates the laws that constrain it, those responsible are not held accountable for their criminal actions. As accountability is the essence of the rule of law, the absence of accountability means the absence of the rule of law.

The list of criminal actions by presidents Bush and Obama, Vice President Cheney, the CIA, the NSA, the US military, and other branches of the government is long and growing. For example, both president Bush and vice president Cheney

violated US and international laws against torture. Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union responded to Bush's recent admission that he authorized torture with calls for a criminal investigation of Bush's crime.

In a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder, the ACLU reminded the US Department of Justice (sic) that "a nation committed to the rule of law cannot simply ignore evidence that its most senior leaders authorized torture."

Rob Freer of Amnesty International said that Bush's admission "to authorizing acts which constitute torture under international law" and which constitute "a crime under international law," puts the US government "under obligation to investigate and to bring those responsible to justice."

The ACLU and Amnesty International do not want to admit it, but the US government shed its commitment to the rule of law a decade ago when the US launched its naked aggression--war crimes under the Nuremberg standard--against Afghanistan and Iraq on the basis of lies and deception.

The US government's contempt for the rule of law took another step when President Bush violated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and had the National Security Agency bypass the FISA court and spy on Americans without warrants. The New York Times is on its high horse about the rule of law in Burma, but when a patriot revealed to the Times that Bush was violating US law, the Times' editors sat on the leak for one year until after Bush was safely re-elected.

Holder, of course, will not attempt to hold Bush accountable for the crime of torture. Indeed, Assistant US Attorney John Durham has just cleared the CIA of accountability for its crime of destroying the videotape evidence of the US government's illegal torture of detainees, a felony under US law.

Last February Cheney said on ABC's This Week that "I was a big supporter of waterboarding." US law has always regarded waterboarding as torture. The US government executed WW II Japanese for waterboarding American POWs. But Cheney has escaped accountability, which means that there is no rule of law.

Vice president Cheney's office also presided over the outing of a covert CIA agent, a felony. Yet, nothing happened to Cheney, and the underling who took the fall had his sentence commuted by president Bush.

President Obama has made himself complicit in the crimes of his predecessor by refusing to enforce the rule of law. In his criminality, Obama has actually surpassed Bush. Bush is the president of extra-judicial torture, extra-judicial detention, extra-judicial spying and invasions of privacy, but Obama has one-upped Bush. Obama is the president of extra-judicial murder.

Not only is Obama violating the sovereignty of an American ally, Pakistan, by sending in drones and special forces teams to murder Pakistani civilians, but in addition Obama has a list of American citizens whom he intends to murder without arrest, presentation of evidence, trial and conviction.

The most massive change brought by Obama is his assertion of the right of the executive branch to murder whomever it wishes without any interference from US and international law. The world has not seen such a criminal government as Obama's since Joseph Stalin's and Hitler's.

On November 8, the US Department of Justice (sic) told federal district court judge John Bates that president Obama's decision to murder American citizens is one of "the very core powers of the president." Moreover, declared the Justice (sic) Department, the murder of American citizens is a "political question" that is not subject to judicial review.

In other words, federal courts exist for one purpose only--to give a faux approval to executive branch actions.

If truth be known, there is more justice in Burma under the military regime than in the USA. The military regime put Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest in her own home.

The military regime did not throw her into a dungeon and rape and torture her under cover of false allegations and

indefinite detention without charges. Moreover, the military "tyrants" released her either as a sign of good will or under pressure from international human rights groups, or some combination of the two.

If only comparable good will existed in the US government or pressure from international human rights groups had equal force in America as in Burma.

But, alas, in America macho tough guys approve the virtual strip search of their wives and daughters by full body scanners and the grouping by TSA thugs of three-year old children screaming in terror.

Unlike in Burma, where Aung San Suu Kyi fights for human rights, the sheeple in Amerika submit to the total invasion of their privacy and to the total destruction of their civil liberties for no other reason than they are brain dead and believe without any evidence that they are at the mercy of "terrorists" in far distant lands who have no armies, navies, or air forces and are armed only with AK-47s and improvised explosive devices.

The ignorant population of the "Great American Superpower," buried in fear propagated by a Ministry of Truth, has acquiesced in the total destruction of the US Constitution and their civil liberties.

Sheeple such as these have no respect anywhere on the face of the earth.

Paul Craig Roberts is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Sunday, November 14, 2010

[Luke/Marti Hiken: America in Crisis. What Now?](#)

America in Crisis. What Now?

by Luke Hiken and Marti Hiken [article link](#)

November 13, 2010 | Progressive Avenues | Global Research

How do we deal with the demise of the two-party electoral system in the U.S.? With U.S./corporate wars occurring throughout the world, deficit and defense spending, a faltering economic system, increasing environmental catastrophes, and the shipping of jobs overseas, the task seems monumental. But, it isn't. Changes can come. Changes will come. The question is: How do we take advantage of the changes taking place and how do we influence them for the good of all the people?

First, what are we facing?

- 1) The wealth of the nation has been consolidated into the hands of a clique of corporate executives that dominate both political parties and determine who the American people will "elect." These corporations, described by many authors as "The Oligarchs," are run and owned by CEOs in the following industries: oil; insurance; pharmaceuticals; agri-business; Wall Street and the banking industry, and the military/security complex. These oligarchs are accountable to no democratic forces in this or any other country.
 - 2) The democratic, organized union movement and working class unity, are long gone. By sending jobs and manufacturing off-shore to other countries, the oligarchs have undermined and destroyed the traditional vehicles for mass opposition to corporate greed and manipulation. This has been accomplished within a legal anti-union framework and the de-politicalization of the working class. There are currently no voices or forces capable of opposing the oligarchs at this time.
 - 3) The oligarchs have seized control of all branches of the U.S. government. The Congress is composed of millionaires accountable to monied interests. The judiciary is no longer chosen by any conceivable democratic process, and consists of the most right-wing zealots that the religious right and prosecutorial machines can envisage. Decisions emanating from the highest courts of both the state and federal governments are so shockingly oppressive as to harken back to the opportunistic courts so aptly described in Robert Mueller's "Hitler's Justice,"
- The Executive Branch speaks in terms of bi-partisanship, which really means "obey your corporate handlers." The differences between the policies of the Bush vs. the Obama administration are simply insignificant.
- 4) The media is controlled and dominated by the oligarchs to the point that any attempts at transparency concerning what is occurring nationally or internationally are met with prosecutions and violence. Whistleblowers, or independent media, publish under threat of serious retaliation.
 - 5) The Oligarchy is so powerful that it is able to halt all attempts at regulation or limitation on their power or wealth. Wall Street and the banking industry continue to pillage at will, and many Americans have lost their life savings, their housing, passable public education, health care, and social services. The super-rich have stolen the wealth of the nation, and the oligarchs have made it impossible for us to take the money back.
 - 6) The rapacious imperialism we see in the Middle East, and throughout the world is no longer controlled and defined by the U.S. government, or the Pentagon, but by mercenary armies outfitted, financed and directed by private corporate interests. It is questionable whether the President of the U.S. or the Pentagon even have the authority to hire or fire these mercenary forces.

Given this pessimistic, but realistic, assessment of the current situation, what are the alternatives available to the American people to regain control over the wealth and politics of the country?

1) PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

People can attempt to organize within the two-party political system dominated by the oligarchs in hopes that the democratic process will allow change to come peacefully and fairly through the electoral process, i.e. that the door is still open for organizing within this forum. If anyone believes such change is possible through the electoral process, and that it will happen soon enough to stop the disastrous course this country is headed in, then we urge them to turn on Fox News, circle the wagons, buy gold, and wait for the military, either ours or the enemy's, to arrive at your doorstep.

Some people feel that organized labor, now less than 9% of the voting public, could have a significant impact on electoral politics. We don't share their optimism in this regard.

2) BUILDING ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

People can attempt to organize locally, and in communities in ways that avoid contact with corporations and institutions associated with the oligarchs, and strive to build "alternative institutions" and communities and economic systems outside of corporate control. The Green Movement, [Yes Magazine](#), [Global Exchange](#) and a variety of groups throughout the nation have embraced this perspective, and hope to build a resistance and world-view separate and distinct from the empire. While such efforts have had notable success in many communities, the ability of such groups to form any meaningful counter-force to the oligarchs is marginal, at best. Perhaps, if these movements were to spread nationally to encompass an ever-growing portion of the disenfranchised population, there could be a new player on the block that could unseat the oligarchs. The idea that such a "revolution" could be accomplished non-violently, or with the cooperation of the oligarchs themselves, seems like a pipe dream to the authors. Nevertheless, hope springs eternal.

3) SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL OPPOSITION

People might also look to international forces that stand opposed to U.S. hegemony throughout the world. Opposition to the manipulations of the dollar by U.S. banks and capital, contempt for US military forays throughout the Middle East and the World; hatred of U.S. corporate and mercenary interventions into the democratic processes of governments throughout the world (coupled with QE2), have all combined to render the U.S. one of the most despised nations in the world. Americans seeking to unseat the oligarchy could support whatever countries stand in opposition to Empire and lend whatever form of legal support is possible for these opposing forces. The successes of the 60s were in many ways attributable to the leadership provided internationally by the Vietnamese, the Cubans, and the other revolutionary struggles that inspired Americans at home.

4) CREATING COMMUNITIES FOR SELF-PROTECTION AND DEFENSE

In many areas of the country, people are forming self-help groups that share resources, teach each other self-defense, engage in joint health-giving techniques, provide collective necessities (food, shelter, nursing assistance), etc., outside of the governmental agencies traditionally responsible for providing a safety net. Because the oligarchs have decided to keep all of the wealth for themselves, they have actively sought to destroy the systems that Americans fought and worked for, including unemployment, medicare, social security, public education, medical services, retirement and other benefits. While there is little formal communication among the sets of communities described above, the potential for establishing such networks is certainly there. In the movie *Battle of Algiers*, the resistance movement created its own legal / social / cultural alternative to the colonial government dominated by the French. In those areas where disenfranchised people can unite and support each other, this approach might be most efficacious.

All of these alternatives are possible and plausible. We must continue to reject the tendencies toward depression/rage and immobilization, and seek new solutions -- a new society that has viable economic and environmental alternatives.

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Vincent Di Stefano: While the Hegemon Caves From Within

While the Hegemon Caves From Within

by Vincent Di Stefano [article link](#)

November 13, 2010 | CommonDreams

The results of the US mid-term elections reflect a return of cynicism and ennui among those who were moved by the visionary promises of Barack Obama as he campaigned for the presidency a short 2 years ago. In May 2008, when campaigning in North Carolina, he described the core message of his campaign in the following terms: "It's not enough just to replace the party in the White House. We've got to change our politics as well." Our collective memories are too short. Our expectations too easily side-stepped.

The past two years have shown that in US politics, it is still business as usual. The problem, of course, is that US business continues to affect us all.

While Obama, shadowed by 250 US business executives, was meeting with high dignitaries in India on his 10-day tour through Southeast Asia, his erstwhile opponent-become-Secretary-of-State Hillary Clinton, accompanied by her Defense Secretary Robert Gates, were meeting with Julia Gillard and her new coterie in Australia.

And while Obama was busily negotiating new arms deals which included securing a \$3.5 billion contract for 10 Boeing C-17 cargo planes -- the sixth biggest arms deal in US history -- and lining up an additional \$11 billion order for 126 combat fighter jets for the Indian air force, Clinton and Gates were meeting with Australian politicians and military planners in order to secure an increased US military presence in Australia.

It was therefore both politic and pragmatic that Obama was met by Jim McNerney, CEO of Boeing, and Jeffrey Imelt, CEO of General Electric, when Air Force One touched down on the Tarmac of Mumbai airport on 7th November. General Electric was recently contracted to supply 107 F414 engines for the new Tejas lightweight jet fighter presently being constructed in India. And for the past 2 years, GE-Hitachi have been jockeying for the construction of new nuclear power stations in India.

It would seem that the US presidency has more decidedly become an office to promote the sale of US arms in a world already ravaged by the effects of too many wars and too much deadly weaponry.

There is no shortage of irony. In a speech given at a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament in New Delhi on 8th November, Obama invoked the spirits of both Gandhi and Martin Luther King: "I've always found inspiration in the life of Ghandiji and his simple and profound lesson to be the change we seek in the world." He went on to say: "After making his pilgrimage to India half a century ago, Dr. King called Ghandi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance 'the only logical and moral approach' in the struggle for justice and progress."

Words have ever been cheap in the theatre of politics. The contradiction between the rhetoric and the action in his speech in New Delhi is as sharp as it was in his acceptance speech for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize at Oslo a year ago.

Despite the hopes and the promises that brought Obama to the US presidency, American pragmatism continues to rule. If the US does not sell its jets and its weapons to India, then the Russians or the Europeans will. The Indian military remains one of the largest importers of military hardware on the planet despite the fact that tens of millions of Indian men, women

and children continue to live in deep poverty. But the whole game plan has now changed. Many who were of the view that Barack Obama shared their insight into what was necessary during this time of escalating planetary difficulties have been left wondering what peculiar deception was at play.

Obama took office at a pivotal point in history. The Bush era had brought the theory and practice of political self-interest to a high pitch. The rich got richer, the already powerful got more power, the belligerent were given greater scope for the exercise of their belligerence.

[As independent journalist Robert Freeman has so astutely pointed out](#), nothing really changed when Obama entered the White House. Mammon's rule was confirmed by Obama's selection of the unholy trinity of Larry Summers, Timothy Geithner and Ben Bernanke to run the country's finances. Under Clinton, Larry Summers had single-mindedly driven the deregulation of banks that enabled the rape of national economies around the globe. He was appointed Head of the National Economic Council. Under George W. Bush, Timothy Geithner had already funneled trillions of dollars of public moneys to his old buddies on Wall Street in the guise of "saving the system". He was appointed Secretary of the Treasury. And as Chairman of the Federal Reserve since 2006, Ben Bernanke had presided over a series of monstrous excesses that fattened the already rich and flayed the poor of what little they had. Bernanke was re-appointed in his role by Obama.

And able economists like Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman and David Korten continue to remain on the margins awaiting the inevitable.

Most of Obama's choices have followed this pattern. Despite his promise to renew and to reform US politics, little has changed. According to Robert Freeman, US banks "are making the largest profits in their history and paying themselves the biggest bonuses on record." Meanwhile, both the Pentagon and the US armaments industry are as busy as ever. Oil and energy companies have demonstrated who is really calling the tune through their scuttling of the Copenhagen Climate Summit last year. Their activities continue unabated. While tar sands continue to be mined in Canada at enormous cost to the environment and enormous expenditure of energy, methane gas begins to pour out of the entire Siberian permafrost region and the Arctic seabed itself. The inexorable receding of immense continental glaciers bodes poorly for those populations dependent on the great river systems issuing from ancient glaciers for their drinking water and for the irrigation waters that enable food production.

The 2008 financial crisis offered an opportunity to clean up the dirty practices that bankrupted literally millions of householders by recklessly enabling unserviceable mortgages and that emptied untold numbers of pension funds and retirement savings by exploiting newly created financial instruments such as derivatives.

The unconditional multi-billion bailout of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler at that time similarly squandered an opportunity to completely redesign transport systems and to transform an obsolete industrial infrastructure.

These opportunities came and went while politicians argued, bankers schemed, oil companies colluded and armaments manufacturers planned.

It would seem we are a refractory species. Not until the situation has become irremediably dire do we begin to take the necessary collective action we could have taken and should have taken long before to prevent widespread collapse and progressive dissolution.

Let us never lose sight of the potencies available to us in familial and community awareness and action during these times of political dereliction and moral abandonment.

Vincent Di Stefano is a retired osteopath and author of "[Holism and Complementary Medicine. History and Principles](#)" published by Allen and Unwin in 2006. He lives in Australia and can be contacted at [The Healing Project](#).

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Friday, November 12, 2010

John Kozy: The Mythical United States of America

The Mythical United States of America: Rushing into Backwardness

by Prof. John Kozy [article link](#)

November 11, 2010 | Global Research

The mythical United States of America so highly lauded exists nowhere. It is a Shangri-la. The Preamble of the Constitution makes perfectly clear what kind of nation the United States was meant to be. What exists today fulfills none of those goals. Some have argued that the nation was a fraud from day one. Whether accurate or not, what is clear is that it most certainly was quickly murdered by John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who wrote the decision known as Marbury v. Madison. Since that day, the Court has replicated England's seventeenth century political economy absent only the monarchy. Today's United States of America is a seventeenth century nation adorned with twenty first century trinkets, many deadly. Instead of being as it claims "the leader of the free world," it is a backward authoritarian pre-enlightenment reactionary regime.

Because my OED is inaccessible at the moment, I cannot specify exactly when the word 'philanthropy,' which etymologically means "love of mankind," came to be applied to the donating of money to build self aggrandizing enterprises. But alas, it has! People seem to have a way of twisting meanings in ways that make the malevolent appear benevolent. And so, enterprises of all kinds have been funded by such 'philanthropy.'

For instance, Carnegie Mellon University was founded by Andrew Carnegie, Andrew W. and Richard B. Mellon; Cornell University was founded by Ezra Cornell and Andrew Dickson White; Purdue University was founded by John Purdue; Rice University was founded by William Marsh Rice; Stanford University was founded by Leland Stanford and his wife. There are hundreds more.

There are museums, too (The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, The Amon Carter Museum of American Art, The Kimbell Art Museum, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art and many more), concert halls (Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall, Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, The Eastman Theatre, Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center to name just a few), Opera Houses (The Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Performance Hall, The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, The Peabody Opera House, The Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House, The BAM Howard Gilman Opera House), innumerable charitable foundations and buildings built for public use such a libraries.

Although it is difficult to deny some merit to most of these enterprises, it is also difficult to even imagine that when Christ said, "love thy neighbor as thyself," he was advocating the kind of love philanthropy has come to express. But belittling philanthropy is not the intent of this piece. These examples are intended solely to lay the basis for an exposition of some contrasts and to draw some revealing conclusions from them.

First of all, the kind of giving described above is not the only kind of giving that has become prevalent. During last week's midterm electioneering, unspecified amounts of money were donated anonymously to Political Action Committees in an attempt to influence the electoral process. What distinguishes this group of donors from those above is the anonymity. The benefactors, in the first group, like the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, have no qualms about putting their names on their projects. (I suspect that more often than not, they insist upon it.) But not the donors in the second group.

Why? I suspect a principle lies behind the difference: People do not hide that in which they take pride! The benefactors in the first group are proud of their giving, they want it made known to all, they want to be remembered for it. So why wouldn't the "benefactors" in the second group be equally proud of their beneficence? Are they merely cowards who lack the courage of their convictions? Or are they ashamed of what they are doing? Are they hiding their shame behind their anonymity? In either case, they cannot be judged kindly.

Anonymity, however, is just one manifestation of a deeper and growing tendency in American society—the trend toward more and more secrecy, and no one, to my knowledge, has revealed the ultimate, disastrous consequences of this tendency.

Recently, Sir John [Sawers](#), the head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, devoted much of a 30-minute address to the central role of secrecy in maintaining security. "Secrecy", he said, "is not a dirty word. Secrecy is not there as a cover-up. Secrecy plays a crucial part in keeping Britain safe and secure. If our operations and methods become public, they won't work."

Alas, Sir John is obviously not a master of the King's English. Secrecy is by definition a cover-up. But Sir John doesn't mean cover-up in the simple sense of hidden; he wants to claim that nothing unseemly or objectionable is being covered up. Unfortunately, that claim is impossible to verify and, if accepted, must be accepted on trust. If someone claims s/he did nothing wrong, the what and how of it must be revealed. How else could it be shown? Yet Sir John claims that the what and how of it must be kept secret.

Consider the claim that the universe contains absolutely undetectable attributes. The sentence appears to make perfectly good sense, but it doesn't. How could the claim ever be given a truth value? All one can really do upon hearing or reading it is shrug one's shoulders. The sentence has no content. The claim that secrets are not cover-ups is similar. To know that what is secret is not a cover-up, the secret must be revealed, but by definition alone, a secret cannot be revealed and be a secret. Such claims are entirely meaningless.

So why should anyone trust the pronouncements of governments and their agents anyhow? That they lie has been demonstrated over and over again in history. In reality, all that the secrecy actually does is arouse suspicion; secrecy leads people to distrust their governments. It also leads nations to distrust each other, and a world in which nations distrust each other is unstable, dangerous, and primed for disaster.

Governmental secrecy also annuls any trappings of democracy that a nation may exhibit. Even a perfectly rational citizenry would be unable to make rational judgments on matters of policy that are kept from it by secrecy. How can anyone be expected to make a rational judgment about something s/he is unaware of? Rational thinking requires premises that are factual. Without that knowledge, the electoral process is a mere formal, meaningless exercise. The people may be told that they are sovereign, but they do not even play a meaningful role in the process. The trappings of democracy do not make a nation democratic. Only transparently revealed truth and honesty do.

Most people assume that the American government is paralyzed by ideological intransigence. The assumption is that our political class has taken the attitude, "my way or no way." But another possibility exists. Perhaps those who truly hold power, those who like things the way they are and want to contravene any change, immediately corrupt or isolate all newly elected officials and all of the ideological rhetoric that is heard is merely theater played to give people the impression that the politicians care. How else can anyone explain how everything stays the same after election after election calls for change? How else can the Congress continue to act as it always has in the face of decades of approval ratings in the lowest quartile? How else can anyone explain why Congress after Congress is a do nothing Congress? Is it because American elections are totally fraudulent? Is it because the Congress has a secret master who functions behind the electoral system?

The mythical United States of America so highly lauded exists nowhere. It is a Shangri-la. The Preamble of the Constitution makes perfectly clear what kind of nation the United States was meant to be. Read it! What exists today fulfills none of those goals.

Some have argued that the nation was a fraud from day one, that the convention that drafted the Constitution was comprised of colonial elite who set out to create a nation that protected their privileges. The facts cited by those making the claim are accurate; the reasoning is often strained. Yet the claim cannot easily be refuted.

Even if the nation was not stillborn, it most certainly was quickly murdered. The dastardly deed took place on February 24, 1803. The killer was John Marshall, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who wrote the decision known as *Marbury v. Madison*, which is not only absurdly argued but treacherous on two accounts. First, Marshall takes the position that "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is" which results in the Court's becoming the sole Constitutional authority subject to no review. Since that day, the Court has ruled the United States of America as a judicial oligarchy. Second, the decision provides the Court with a paradigm on which it could base clearly and obviously unjust decisions. Marshall agreed that *Marbury* was entitled to relief but refused to provide it. That is clearly unjust; yet the Constitution clearly says that one of the nation's purposes is to "establish justice."

Even though Marshall's argument is absurd, no one but Jefferson challenged it. He writes, "the opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional and what not, not only for themselves in their own sphere of action but for the Legislature and Executive also in their spheres, would make the Judiciary a despotic branch." It is clearly contradictory to say on the one hand that the Court has the duty to "say what the law is" and then say that the Court is constrained from providing *Marbury* with the relief he is entitled to because the written Constitution doesn't give the Court the authority to grant it. The written Constitution doesn't give the Court the authority to "say what the law is" either. Yet no one pointed out that if it were the Court's duty to say "what the law is," legislatures are superfluous. So Marshall on this day, murdered the Republic.

Why no one but Jefferson cared is curious. Was it, indeed, because the colonial elite who had taken control of the government never really fully supported the Constitution's republican principles? We will never know. But before the Constitution was ratified, the colonies were rife with political tracts both in favor of and against its ratification. The *Federalist Papers* are the most well known of these and were apparently written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. All three were alive when Marshall's opinion was issued; yet none wrote a single tract in opposition to Marshall's action. How strange!

Yet, the result is obvious. What John Marshall did was reproduce England's seventeenth century political economy absent only the monarchy, and the courts have promoted and maintained this abomination ever since. Today's United States of America is a seventeenth century nation adorned with twenty first century trinkets, many deadly. Instead of being as it claims "the leader of the free world," it is a backward authoritarian pre-enlightenment reactionary regime. That people is the big secret! It dare not be revealed.

In early modern Europe the state was organized to fight more and more intense wars which requires professional armies and leads national governments into perennial debt. Some claim that the need to fight bigger and bigger wars created the state as we know it. Diplomacy was carried on by nations in secret from opponents, adversaries, and their own peoples. Although not yet known as such, *Realpolitik* characterized the age. Politics and diplomacy were based primarily on considerations of power and national interests, not ideals, morals, or principles. Balancing the power of authoritarian nations was said to be necessary to keep the peace, but it never did. How does this description of seventeenth century Europe differ from a description of the world's condition today? What is different?

Calling the United States a backward authoritarian pre-enlightenment reactionary nation may seem harsh, but how else can anyone explain, no less justify, the American willingness to overthrow democratically elected governments, support right-wing dictatorships, and become a willing partner with the most corrupt nations on earth? No nation steeped in the principles of democracy would engage in such practices.

So what do advocates of this seventeenth century realpolitik hope to achieve? To what end is this policy being pursued? Three hundred years of history has shown that it will never bring peace or security. Going to war to preserve the peace is absurd; anyone who advocates such nonsense should be ridiculed into hiding.

People, remember this. Empires upon which it was said that the sun never set disintegrated in plain daylight. All the king's horses and all the king's men could not bind them together. So I propose that everyone ask an Englishman this question: What of value does today's ordinary Englishman possess that s/he would not have possessed had the Empire never existed? When you learn the answer to that question you will realize how all the resources and lives lost to create and attempt to hold the Empire were totally wasted. And that is what always happens to the resources and people expended in empire building.

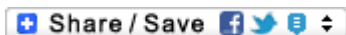
People, secrecy is an abomination. People do not hide that in which they take pride! When governments keep secrets, they're hiding shameful, immoral, or illegal acts. War is the opposite of peace and cannot secure it. Secrecy breeds distrust, suspicion, and conflict; they are not ways of winning friends and influencing people. Realpolitik is really Vilepolitik. Until the welfare of human beings everywhere rather than the welfare of institutions becomes the goal of human activity, the people will never be anything but cannon and factory fodder to be sacrificed for absolutely nothing worthwhile.

So it's time, past time, way past time to close the door on seventeenth century authoritarian government.

John Kozy is a retired professor of philosophy and logic who writes on social, political, and economic issues. After serving in the U.S. Army during the Korean War, he spent 20 years as a university professor and another 20 years working as a writer. He has published a textbook in formal logic commercially, in academic journals and a small number of commercial magazines, and has written a number of guest editorials for newspapers. His on-line pieces can be found on <http://www.jkozy.com/> and he can be emailed from that site's homepage.

John Kozy is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Thursday, November 11, 2010

[Nora Eisenberg: 10 Hard Truths About War for Veterans Day \(and Every Other Day\)](#)

10 Hard Truths About War for Veterans Day (and Every Other Day)

By Nora Eisenberg [article link](#)
November 11, 2010 | AlterNet

Veterans Day, which Americans celebrate on November 11, was originally called Armistice Day, to commemorate the cessation of fighting in the Great War of 1914-1918. In the United States, the idea that this was “the war to end all wars,” (a phrase coined by H.G. Wells in a pamphlet of that name and echoed by Woodrow Wilson with equal earnestness) was challenged by an outspoken and persecuted peace movement, including poor farmers and black Americans conscripted at disproportionate rates.

Most Americans may have accepted the justification at the war's start, but by the war's end, with a U.S. body count of 117,000 and double that in serious injuries (and 37 million casualties overall on both sides, 16 million deaths and 21 million wounded), the signing of the Armistice by Allies and Germans at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 was met with celebration that it might mean a true “end of war.” In 1919, a year later, Armistice Day was established

to celebrate "the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be severed."

After World War II and the Korean War, and the start of a heated Cold War, it was clear to the government that an armistice and peace were not in sync with the times. In 1954, Congress changed the name of the November 11 holiday to Veterans Day, exchanging peace for celebrating patriotic valor, and the ultimate sacrifice of life, limb and health in battling for one's country.

Today's veterans are survivors of more than a half century of American wars—World War II, Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, the 1991 Gulf War (which has never been officially declared over), and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As we celebrate our veterans this week, we would do well to remember the following realities that the public is barely aware of, but veterans know only too well:

1) It took almost 50 years for the government to acknowledge the suffering of more than 200,000 U.S. veterans exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange, which the U.S. military used for a decade to defoliate forests and destroy food sources in Vietnam. Despite higher incidences of cancer, neurological, digestive, skin, lung and heart disorders along with miscarriages and birth defects, the DoD denied any linkage of exposure and disease, and disability claims, which veterans initiated in 1977 were mostly denied. By 1993 only 400 veterans exposed to Agent Orange had been granted some compensation.

Class action suits against companies like Monsanto and Dow Chemical settled out of court for small amounts. After much advocacy by veterans and their supporters, the 1991 Agent Orange Act was passed, allowing the VA to declare specific conditions "presumptive" to Agent Orange. This summer the list was expanded to include B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. Still, after five decades, compensation is small with the vast majority of awards at 20 percent or \$243 monthly.

2) Almost a third of the 700,000 veterans of the 1991 Gulf War suffer from a profound physiological disorder called Gulf War Illness (formerly Gulf War Syndrome). For almost 20 years, the DoD and VA insisted that psychological stress alone was the cause of the fatigue, mood disorders, cognition and memory problems, and disorders of every physical system as well as birth defects of veterans' children. To date, some 11,000 veterans have died from the illness, and most survivors continue to suffer chronic symptoms. In 2008, the Gulf War Research Advisory Committee (RAC) reported what veterans have known too well—that wartime toxins, not stress, caused profound physical illness in almost 300,000 veterans of Desert Storm.

RAC identified in particular a class of neurotoxins found in experimental anti-nerve gas pills that troops were forced to take upon threat of court martial, pesticides and sarin gas, which plumed for hundreds of miles when Iraq munition storage facilities known to contain nerve gas were exploded. RAC did not rule out vaccines or depleted uranium, pioneered during the Gulf War for its ability to penetrate most anything. Yet the RAC report's recommendations for immediate interventions and programs have not been followed, but rather remain the subject of further study by the Institute of Medicine.

3) Veterans of ongoing fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered a variety of physical traumas beyond the widespread maiming and loss of limbs. Last year, the DoD warned that as many as 20 percent of veterans (360,000) may have suffered traumatic brain injury from IED blasts. Blast injuries generally do not result in skull fractures or loss of consciousness, yet the Institute of Medicine has reported that these traumatic brain injuries may cause diffuse brain bleeding and result in PTSD and problems with mood, concentration, memory, pain, balance, hearing and vision.

In addition, veterans have suffered multiple toxic exposures, including contaminated water, and dioxin and other carcinogenic compounds from the widespread use of burn pits instead of incinerators in Iraq and Afghanistan. Everything from refrigerators to trucks to body parts has been reported burning in the vast pits, which spew black smoke for miles and cause the black phlegm known as "Iraq crud." Several class action suits have been filed against contractors like KBR on behalf of veterans sickened by toxic exposure.

4) On any given night, more than 200,000 veterans are homeless, and 1.5 million veterans are considered at risk for homelessness. Because of lack of work, support networks and substandard housing, veterans without homes have served in every war with surviving populations--World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, the 1991 Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Vietnam veterans have long comprised the largest portion of the homeless veteran population, but veterans of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have become homeless much sooner than veterans of the Vietnam War did. PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI) can cause severe psychiatric symptoms from mood disorders to depression, aggressive and dangerous behaviors, substance abuse and alcoholism. In addition to psychiatric, neurological and physical injury, multiple deployments, the high cost of housing, reduced job opportunities, and low wages endanger family stability, employability and maintaining a steady residence.

5) The population of homeless women has skyrocketed from 5 to 20 percent over the last decade as more women are deployed into battle. Women veterans are two to four times more likely than non-veteran women to be homeless. Approximately 40 percent of homeless female veterans of today's wars report being sexually assaulted by male soldiers while in service, with sexual abuse being a major risk factor for homeless according to the VA Homeless Programs director. Fifty-six percent of all homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic, despite being only 12.8 percent and 15.4 percent of the population, respectively.

6) Over a half million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are patients in the VA system. Thousands more wait as much as a year for VA treatment for serious ailments including traumatic brain injury. Forty-eight percent (243,685) are mental health patients and 28 percent (143,530) are being treated for PTSD. A recent internal VA memo revealed systematic gaming of the VA application process, whereby bureaucrats at facilities seek to improve access data by denying treatment.

7) Every day, five U.S. soldiers attempt suicide, a 500 percent increase since 2001. Every day 18 U.S. veterans attempt suicide, more than four times the national average. Of the 30,000 suicides each year in the U.S., 20 percent are committed by veterans, though veterans make up only 7.6 percent of the population. Female veteran suicide is rising at a rate higher than male veteran suicides.

8) The number of U.S. service men and women killed in Afghanistan has doubled in the first quarter of 2010, compared to the same quarter last year. In the first two months of 2010, injuries tripled.

9) Estimates of civilian deaths from violence in Iraq alone range from a conservative 105,000 (Iraq Body Count project) to over 1.2 million (UK pollster Opinion Research Business), with estimates by Johns Hopkins at 655,000. More than 125,000 civilians have been injured in Iraq and 4 million displaced, with civilian death and injury in 2010 rising each month. By most estimates, tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed or injured since the 2001 invasion; over 200,00 have been internally displaced; and over two million have become refugees, with civilian deaths and injuries rising dramatically in 2010.

10) U.S. veterans live with these horrific realities daily. Many are acutely aware as they suffer, of the suffering they have inflicted on others.

Nora Eisenberg is the director of the City University of New York's fellowship program for emerging scholars. Her writing has appeared in the Partisan Review, Village Voice, the Los Angeles Times and Tikkun. Her most recent novel, '[When You Come Home](#)' (Curbstone, 2009), explores the the 1991 Gulf War and Gulf War illness.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [2:06 PM](#) [0 comments](#)

Wednesday, November 10, 2010

Noam Chomsky: Outrage, Misguided

Outrage, Misguided

By Noam Chomsky [article link](#)

November 09, 2010 | ICH

The U.S. midterm elections register a level of anger, fear and disillusionment in the country like nothing I can recall in my lifetime. Since the Democrats are in power, they bear the brunt of the revulsion over our current socioeconomic and political situation.

More than half the “mainstream Americans” in a Rasmussen poll last month said they view the Tea Party movement favorably—a reflection of the spirit of disenchantment.

The grievances are legitimate. For more than 30 years, real incomes for the majority of the population have stagnated or declined while work hours and insecurity have increased, along with debt. Wealth has accumulated, but in very few pockets, leading to unprecedented inequality.

These consequences mainly spring from the financialization of the economy since the 1970s and the corresponding hollowing-out of domestic production. Spurring the process is the deregulation mania favored by Wall Street and supported by economists mesmerized by efficient-market myths.

People see that the bankers who were largely responsible for the financial crisis and who were saved from bankruptcy by the public are now reveling in record profits and huge bonuses. Meanwhile official unemployment stays at about 10 percent. Manufacturing is at Depression levels: one in six out of work, with good jobs unlikely to return.

People rightly want answers, and they are not getting them except from voices that tell tales that have some internal coherence—if you suspend disbelief and enter into their world of irrationality and deceit.

Ridiculing Tea Party shenanigans is a serious error, however. It is far more appropriate to understand what lies behind the movement’s popular appeal, and to ask ourselves why justly angry people are being mobilized by the extreme right and not by the kind of constructive activism that rose during the Depression, like the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations).

Now Tea Party sympathizers are hearing that every institution—government, corporations and the professions—is rotten, and that nothing works.

Amid the joblessness and foreclosures, the Democrats can’t complain about the policies that led to the disaster. President Ronald Reagan and his Republican successors may have been the worst culprits, but the policies began with President Jimmy Carter and accelerated under President Bill Clinton. During the presidential election, Barack Obama’s primary constituency was financial institutions, which have gained remarkable dominance over the economy in the past generation.

That incorrigible 18th-century radical Adam Smith, speaking of England, observed that the principal architects of power were the owners of the society—in his day the merchants and manufacturers—and they made sure that government policy would attend scrupulously to their interests, however “grievous” the impact on the people of England; and worse, on the victims of “the savage injustice of the Europeans” abroad.

A modern and more sophisticated version of Smith’s maxim is political economist Thomas Ferguson’s “investment theory of politics,” which sees elections as occasions when groups of investors coalesce in order to control the state by selecting the architects of policies who will serve their interests.

Ferguson's theory turns out to be a very good predictor of policy over long periods. That should hardly be surprising. Concentrations of economic power will naturally seek to extend their sway over any political process. The dynamic happens to be extreme in the U.S.

Yet it can be said that the corporate high rollers have a valid defense against charges of "greed" and disregard for the health of the society. Their task is to maximize profit and market share; in fact, that's their legal obligation. If they don't fulfill that mandate, they'll be replaced by someone who will. They also ignore systemic risk: the likelihood that their transactions will harm the economy generally. Such "externalities" are not their concern—not because they are bad people, but for institutional reasons.

When the bubble bursts, the risk-takers can flee to the shelter of the nanny state. Bailouts—a kind of government insurance policy—are among many perverse incentives that magnify market inefficiencies.

"There is growing recognition that our financial system is running a doomsday cycle," economists Peter Boone and Simon Johnson wrote in the Financial Times in January. "Whenever it fails, we rely on lax money and fiscal policies to bail it out. This response teaches the financial sector: Take large gambles to get paid handsomely, and don't worry about the costs—they will be paid by taxpayers" through bailouts and other devices, and the financial system "is thus resurrected to gamble again—and to fail again."

The doomsday metaphor also applies outside the financial world. The American Petroleum Institute, backed by the Chamber of Commerce and the other business lobbies, has intensified its efforts to persuade the public to dismiss concerns about anthropogenic global warming—with considerable success, as polls indicate. Among Republican congressional candidates in the 2010 election, virtually all reject global warming.

The executives behind the propaganda know that global warming is real, and our prospects grim. But the fate of the species is an externality that the executives must ignore, to the extent that market systems prevail. And the public won't be able to ride to the rescue when the worst-case scenario unfolds.

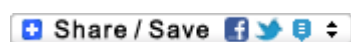
I am just old enough to remember those chilling and ominous days of Germany's descent from decency to Nazi barbarism, to borrow the words of Fritz Stern, the distinguished scholar of German history. In a 2005 article, Stern indicates that he has the future of the United States in mind when he reviews "a historic process in which resentment against a disenchanted secular world found deliverance in the ecstatic escape of unreason."

The world is too complex for history to repeat, but there are nevertheless lessons to keep in mind as we register the consequences of another election cycle. No shortage of tasks waits for those who seek to present an alternative to misguided rage and indignation, helping to organize the countless disaffected and to lead the way to a better future.

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Noam Chomsky, who has taught linguistics at MIT since 1955, has revolutionized the scientific study of language. A prolific author and activist, Chomsky has weighed in on all major political issues of the last five decades. His most recent book, "[Hopes and Prospects](#)", a survey of the dangers and prospects of our early twenty-first century, is available on [Amazon.com](#) and elsewhere.

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Ted Rall: As the Country Falls Apart, It's Time for Our Revolution

As the Country Falls Apart, It's Time for Our Revolution

By Ted Rall [article link](#)

November 10, 2010 | Seven Stories Press | AlterNet

The following is an excerpt from Ted Rall's new book, [The Anti-American Manifesto](#) (Seven Stories, 2010).

You can feel it. Or maybe you can't.

It doesn't matter whether you feel it or not. It's happening. The story of the United States of America as we know it -- not merely as the world's dominant superpower, but as a discrete political, economic, and geographic entity -- is drawing to a close due to a convergence of emerging economic, environmental, and political crises.

Nothing lasts forever, empires least of all. And this one, which only began to expand in earnest circa the year 1900, doesn't feel like it has the staying power of ancient Rome.

Not at all.

But we're not here to talk about the vague possibility of collapse at some point in the future. We are here -- in this book and within this historical moment -- because the collapse feels as though it is currently in progress.

We are here because the U.S. is going to end soon. There's going to be an intense, violent, probably haphazard struggle for control. It's going to come down to us versus them. The question is: What are you going to do about it?

Definitions:

Us: *Hard-working, underpaid, put upon, thoughtful, freedom-loving, disenfranchised, ordinary people*

Them: *Reactionary, stupid, overpaid, greedy, shortsighted, exploitative, power-mad, abusive politicians and corporate executives*

In 2008, like the people of the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, we put our hopes into a young new leader. He is the kind of fresh-faced reformer who just might have been able to do some good had he been put into power decades ago. "Black Man Given Nation's Worst Job," read the headline in the satirical weekly newspaper the Onion after Barack Obama won. He has failed. It is by design that internal reformers like Mikhail Gorbachev and Obama inevitably come too late to actually accomplish anything. Even if a leader like Obama were inclined to push for the sweeping reforms that might save American late-stage capitalism from itself, as did Franklin D. Roosevelt -- and there is no evidence that the thought has crossed Obama's mind -- his fellow powerbrokers, fixated on quarterly profit statements and personal position, would never allow it.

The media talks a lot about reform. But it's too late for nips and tucks. Reform can only fix a system if the system is viable and open to change. Neither is true about the United States of America.

A veneer of normalcy slapped -- sloppily slapped -- on top of a stinking pile of obviously out-of-control unsustainability can no longer disguise the ugly truth: The United States of America is finished. Shopkeepers still take our dollars, foreigners still fear our bombs, but watching the crazy federal deficits, the wildly expanding international military presence, the putrid joke that is our healthcare / education / employment system, and a natural world in free fall (mainly due to the crap pumped into the air and water by the people and corporations of the United States) makes the debate over whether Democrats are better than Republicans feel surreal.

Government exists to serve economic power. In the U.S. and globally, economic power is concentrated in business, namely the large corporations whose profits account for more than ten percent of the nation's gross domestic product. Corporations

can't operate without the government. They are codependent, yet independent of and barely responsive to the nation. A nation goes on with or without its government, with or without the big businesses we take for granted. We are not the government that serves those companies. They are parasites, vampires, hideous monsters that underpay and overcharge us and get fat on the spread. Who are we then?

We are their victims. We are weak and pathetic. But only by choice.

We can wait for the system to collapse of its own accord, for the rage of the downtrodden and dispossessed to build, for chaos of some sort to expose and destroy it. But implosion might take a long time. And when it happens, we may find ourselves even more powerless than we are now. They -- the hardcore, racist, undereducated, fundamentalist Christian, anti-civil liberties Right -- are preparing to step into the breach, to seize power. They can't wait to unleash their venomous hatred on the city-dwelling commie hipster fags they despise. They are armed. They recognize that the system is doomed. They've seen this coming. They're organized and willing to merge their disparate brands of conservatism under a common leadership. Most importantly, they get it. They don't need to be convinced that everything is in play. *They're putting it in play.*

Christian fundamentalists, the millennial end-of-the-worlders obsessed with the Left Behind series about the End Times, neo-Nazi racists, rural black-helicopter Michigan Militia types cut from the same inbred cloth as Timothy McVeigh, allied with "mainstream" gun nuts and right-wing Republicans, have been planning, preparing, and praying for the destruction of the "Godless," "secular" United States for decades. In the past, they formed groups like the John Birch Society and the Aryan Nations. Now the hard Right has a postmodern, decentralized non-organization organization called the Tea Party.

Right-wing organizational names change, but they amount to the same thing: the reactionary sociopolitical force -- the sole force -- poised to fill the vacuum when collapse occurs. The scenario outlined by Margaret Atwood's prescient novel *The Handmaid's Tale* -- rednecks in the trenches, hard military men running things, minorities and liberals taken away and massacred, setting the stage for an even more extreme form of laissez-faire corporate capitalism than we're suffering under today -- is a fair guess of how a post-U.S. scenario will play out unless we prepare to turn it in another direction.

Although the U.S. has fascist tendencies, it is unlikely that an ascendant American right would embrace fascism in its classic form. But a post-collapse reactionary government would likely have some attributes of fascism. Robert Paxton, who was my history professor at Columbia and is widely regarded as the nation's leading expert on the field, wrote the book on the subject (*The Anatomy of Fascism*). As Professor Paxton told me in 1991, the United States is the nation that is the most likely to go fascist, the one that has the most of the necessary ingredients -- including distrust of parliamentary democracy, extreme militarism, and a highly industrialized society -- required for a true fascist state. As things stand, there will be no one to prevent this nightmare.

So this book is a call to arms. And an appeal to self-preservation to those who know we can do better.

If Not Now, When?

A war is coming. At stake: our lives, the planet, freedom, living. The government, the corporations, and the extreme right are prepared to coalesce into an Axis of Evil. Are you going to fight back? Will you do whatever it takes, including taking up arms?

History does not really repeat itself. No two historical moments are ever the same. The circumstances that govern a given street corner in Pittsburgh at 8:00 p.m. on December 9, 2011, will never recur.

Yet the motivations and needs of human beings remain constant. There are always parallels with the past, lessons to be learned, bits and pieces that will apply to present and future circumstances. There are even a few eternal truths.

Thinking about the present situation, the historical analogy that best seems to fit the current crisis is the collapse -- to be exact, the period shortly before the collapse -- of the Soviet Union. The parallels are instructive and scary:

- * Overextended empire (U.S. forces currently fighting in Yemen, Pakistan, the Philippines, Colombia, Haiti, plus more than five hundred thousand soldiers and U.S.-funded mercenaries stationed in hundreds of bases around the world)
- * Fiscal crisis (skyrocketing national debt owned by foreigners, insane military budget, soaring trade deficits, crash of credit markets, wildly imbalanced tax structure)
- * Foreign quagmire (to wit, Afghanistan and Iraq) ! Rising rampant unemployment (unofficial rates over 20 percent)
- * Lack of confidence of the citizenry in their government
- * Increasingly out-of-touch rulers (government officials talking about economic recovery, declaring recessions over when they never talk about them starting, focusing on bank bailouts when everyone knows it would be more effective to directly help mortgage holders)
- * Exceptionalist delusions (the belief that we're too big, different, and good to fail, which stifles any attempt to discuss problems)
- * Widespread apathy (low voter turnout, disinterest in news and politics, drastically low newspaper readership but growth of hyperlocal media)
- * Weak or nonexistent opposition

That last item is where you come in.

You must change that. You must become strong. You must organize. You must do whatever it takes to oppose the system. When you get the chance, you must destroy it. If you don't kill it, it will die nonetheless. But it will drag us down along with it. That is what happened to the Russians. Though some Marxist analysts attribute the events of 1991 to counterrevolutionary forces -- the politicians who gathered around Boris Yeltsin certainly fit the bill in some respects -- the Soviet government wasn't actually toppled. It collapsed. Broke and ideologically exhausted, its adherence to revolutionary socialist principles having devolved to mere lip service, the very idea of government as a viable and necessary entity withered and disappeared. Power decentralized. Without an organized group of opposition leaders poised to take the reins, the vacuum was filled by former factory managers and gangsters who backed the men who morphed into Russia's present-day oligarchs.

Today Russia is the world's biggest narcostate, a playground for *biznesmeni* (businessmen) and brutal men who murder journalists and anyone else who criticizes them. Disparity of wealth has soared. A tiny elite, one or two percent of the population, owns everything. There are slot machines in the Moscow metro.

Revolution, though bloody and terrifying, would have been easier than the slow convulsions of collapse. So it will be here.

If the U.S. government is going to collapse anyway, it behooves us to first replace it with something that can stand in its place. Unless we act, we'll have to deal with a post-collapse scenario, in which we'll have to fend off roving criminal gangs, hoodlums, predatory corporations, oppressive residual government entities, and an emboldened political right.

Mad Max, Not Ecotopia

The enemy is inertia. There are a zillion reasons not to do anything; indeed, we Americans haven't done anything -- hell, we haven't *thought* about doing anything -- for generations. So, at risk of repeating myself, I must emphasize that our current crisis -- economic and political collapse, a surging right poised to take over, with possible environmental apocalypse looming just around the corner -- is not going to resolve itself in a way that we like if we sit on our asses. The current U.S. government must be prophylactically removed. Our economic and social structure must be radically reinvented. These things can only happen by using force.

Though small in numbers, anarchists and "deep-green" anti-civilization environmentalists are highly influential in what passes for the American Left, publishing well-regarded books, magazines, and blogs that inspire many people. Deep-green types fantasize about a collapse scenario that will save the world without anyone having to lift a finger. They imagine an involuntarily deindustrializing economy that allows the earth to heal while people gather to form small clans and low-impact villages based on ideals of equality. Here is a quote from Jan Lundberg, a deep-green proponent of "peak oil" theory: "New social norms and tribal law will help break from the past and possibly outlaw incipient reversion to the failed system of exploitation of people and nature. In any case, the 'new' model of sharing and cooperation will outdo in

productivity any vestiges of the old models of selfishness and trying to insulate oneself or one's family from the surrounding changed world."

That would be nice, but I don't see how the deep-green idyll could logically follow the disintegration of the United States government. Theoretically, people might form intentional communities (the current term for communes) and/or polyamorous clans of one hundred to one hundred fifty in Ecotopia (the term for a theoretical independent Pacific Northwest), living off the land, all local and sustainable-like. But these utopian societies won't be able to count on being left alone to live peacefully. The millions of partisans who follow Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, and right-wing televangelists happen to be the best-armed people around, and they despise just about everyone who doesn't think and pray like them. They will see collapse as affirmation of their beliefs that secular liberalism is destructive. They will also see it as an opportunity to create a new, ordered world atop the ashes. They will act to stop teenage sluts from getting abortions, teach niggers a lesson, and slaughter those spics, dots, and everyone else who doesn't fit into their vision of what and who is right. Anarchists may opt out of revolution, but counterrevolution will come to them.

Collapse of the U.S. government will be a multidimensional disaster. People, infrastructure, and institutions we count on will be destroyed. How will we live without water treatment plants, heating fuel, and industrially-manufactured medicines? What will likely follow will be frightening and even more destructive: post-Soviet-style gangster capitalism, perhaps, warlordism in rural areas, a hard turn to the racist right, even genocide. Doing nothing will seal our doom.

So let's do something. Let's seize power now, before it's too late. Before they (the bad people who are waiting in the wings) do.

If you are old enough to remember the early 1980s, how did you feel when you watched the news and saw Polish workers rise up under the banner of the Solidarity movement?

When Chinese students took over Tiananmen Square? When the citizens of Moscow took to the streets to put down a coup by Soviet officials meant to end *perestroika*? When you watched Afghan women burn their *burqas* after the 2001 U.S. invasion that deposed the Taliban? You were probably thrilled. After all, these news stories were presented by U.S. corporate media as officially approved acts of personal and national liberation. And there was some truth to that. These were acts of free will. Of courage. In defense of freedom. You had to have been happy.

I was. I was excited -- even though I knew there was less than met the eye to these news accounts. Afghan women, for example, got paid five hundred bucks each by major network television crews to burn their *burqas*. After the Broll had been shot, they bought new *burqas* for a buck and put them on. I was in Afghanistan at the time, so I know the truth. Yet the power of television is such that I am moved when I watch this (phony) footage. Even though it's bullshit. It's like the statue of Saddam Hussein being pulled down in 2003. It is known that the show at Firdos Square was staged³ by a U.S. Army "Psy-Ops" propaganda detachment. The men kicking "Saddam's" head were flown in from exile on U.S. military transports for the occasion; many of them weren't even Iraqi. Nevertheless, images of liberation are always intoxicating.

How do you feel when you hear about a revolution? You feel good. Oppressors have been toppled, justice has been served, and the people have taken control of their own destiny.

So why not you?

Why not us? Why shouldn't we free ourselves? Why shouldn't we seize the mansions and bank accounts of the rich/thieves? Why shouldn't we nationalize corporations? Why can't we take the CEOs who pay themselves millions while firing workers, put them on trial, and throw them in prison? Why shouldn't we bring home the foot soldiers of the military-industrial complex, close the bases overseas, end the wars, and use the resulting peace dividend to build schools and pay teachers decently and heal the sick?

Why let people in other countries have all the fun/take all the risks? Because the U.S. government is mean? Because its police and soldiers and security apparatus will shoot and beat and jail and ruin anyone and anything that opposes it? Cowardice is no excuse.

It isn't even viable. In the not-so-long run, taking no these bastards continue to screw up our country, our nations, and our natural world, we will die horribly anyway. Those in power are tenacious; if only to save ourselves from their now widely apparent excesses, we must be more determined and persistent and ruthless and violent than they are.

Revolution? Here's an App for That

No there isn't. When I showed early drafts of this manifesto to my friends, many asked: What should I do? Should I hide in the mountains? Learn how to shoot? Stockpile guns and canned food? Rob a bank? Or should I just live my life, remain alert, and train myself to recognize the revolutionary moment when it comes, so I can spring into action?

I get it, they told me. We're in trouble. We need a revolution. But there aren't any groups to join. *What do you want us to do, Rall?*

Well, that's not what this book is about. I don't want to lead a revolution -- not because I'm not willing, but because I wouldn't be good at it. I'm not wired that way. I've never even been a community organizer.

I want to kick people in the ass. To get them thinking. To get you thinking. I want you to understand the situation -- your situation. I want you to see that revolt is a good idea, and that it has never been more necessary. I also want you to size up the opposition (both the government and action is by far the more dangerous prospect. If we let the extreme right): They will never get weaker. We have as good a chance at taking them on as ever.

I want *you* to lead the revolution -- not by giving orders, but by choosing to revolt. Lead, in other words, by taking possession of yourself.

What should you do? Mao said revolution isn't a dinner party, meaning that it's often ugly, violent, and even unjust. I say revolution isn't like joining MoveOn.org or a Facebook group. You don't just click a link and authorize a PayPal donation. Revolution doesn't happen within the system; revolution is the act of destroying the system. Who are you? That's the first question. What you should do is one thing if you're a taxi driver, something else if you're an accountant who plays in a band on weekends, and something different entirely if you're a kid.

It's not like no one has ever had to figure this stuff out before. When France fell to the Germans in 1940, a significant minority of Frenchmen decided to resist the occupation. But they didn't know what to do, much less who they could trust. There wasn't a Resistance yet. So people went about their business, looking and waiting for a chance to do something. The first step, it turned out, was reaching out to other people. Would neighbors help? Or at least keep quiet? Sometimes the patriots judged incorrectly. Collaborators turned in friends, even members of their own families, to the Gestapo. The stakes were high: torture, death, possibly the murder of their families. Obviously, this isn't Vichy France -- but finding allies you can trust is a logical first step.

After they had formed cells, the next step for would-be French resisters was to decide what form their resistance would take. Some Parisian policemen tipped off Jews that they were about to be arrested. Train workers, many of whom were members of the communist labor union CGT, collected intelligence with a view toward passing it along to the Allies. Some women slept with high-ranking Nazi officers in order to collect pillow talk or allow a comrade to kill the officers during sex. In short, people did what they could.

What can you do? That's up to you. You know yourself. I don't. Figure it out.

It seems likely that at this point in history a decentralized organization -- a "group" that isn't a group at all, an organization without any leadership whatsoever, a group that is really a set of principles and ideas -- stands a better chance of successfully avoiding high-tech government spying and carrying out actions. The Earth Liberation Front, for example, includes among its principles that no humans or animals should be harmed while carrying out an ELF action. There are several other rules. If you follow all of them, congrats! You're "in" ELF. Other contemporary examples of decentralized organizations include the Animal Liberation Front, Al Qaeda, and the Tea Party. Al Qaeda famously allows itself to be "franchised." Though based in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Al Qaeda now has spin-off groups such as Al Qaeda in

Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia and Yemen). Think of all the Al Qaeda "number two" men who have been killed or arrested since 9/11 -- Al Qaeda has only grown stronger. That's because personalities don't matter in a decentralized movement. Ideas do. The more a government tries to crush a decentralized resistance organization, the more moderates are radicalized by heavy-handedness. Now we even have the newly identified phenomenon of "self-radicalization," in other words, the process of reading and getting pissed off.

Action is preferable to inaction. But there's always a place for "sleepers" -- people who wait until the moment is right to strike. Maybe they want to see the early signs of a mass uprising before committing themselves. Or perhaps they're unwilling to participate directly yet are willing to provide passive assistance -- a safe house, say, or financial help or simply looking the other way when something is going down. Part of the revolution may be fought virtually, by hackers. These individuals are every bit as valuable as people who blow stuff up.

Will the United States ever generate a mass movement? Will thousands or even millions of people be willing to commit to militant action against the state? I don't know.

I don't think it matters. If everyone waits to see who else is willing to take the chance to resist before resisting himself or herself, no one will resist. As we saw in apartheid-era South Africa, the existence of even small, radical, armed cadres could move the national conversation toward action on the part of millions of others.

I can't hold your hand. I don't want you to buy into everything I say. It's not about me. I don't care if you agree with me. I MAY BE WRONG ABOUT EVERYTHING

I want you to THINK dammit! Figure out for yourself what is wrong. Then, once you know what's wrong, don't just grab a beer and veg out, or go to a yoga class, or whatever. Act! Do something about it!

To paraphrase a woman who spent time in prison for her radical activities in the 1960s, once you choose the path of committed citizenship, of true patriotism, of standing up for yourself and your fellow human beings and other living things who can't speak for themselves, your journey can end in only one of three ways: victory, prison, or death.

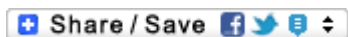
Then consider the alternative. Once you commit your self to apathy, laziness, and tacit consent to mass murder and rampant injustice, your miserable, wasteful choice can end only with death.

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Tuesday, November 9, 2010

Nomi Prins: Wall Street Wins Again

Wall Street Wins Again

by Nomi Prins [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 9, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

The Republicans may have stormed the House, but it was Wall Street and the Fed that won the election. Regardless of party power plays and posturing, there are two constants that remain unaltered after the election. First, Wall Street will continue on with business as usual while shifting its campaign and lobbying dollars to the new winning team. And second, the Fed will keep on pretending to prop up the economy by buying more U.S. debt, thereby keeping interest rates low, the dollar weak and money cheap for the banking system to inhale. This fictional boosting of the financial economy, absent the real boosting of the general economy, will march on sans debate, inspection or restriction.

In the wake of the election, the Fed pulled off a move detected only by downtown Manhattan. It quietly announced a purchase of \$600 billion in Treasury securities (read: our debt) while pundits on the left and right were dissecting the role of the tea party in political life as we know it, the Obama dissatisfaction quotient, and the chance of Sarah Palin heading for the White House in 2012.

That \$600 billion figure was about twice what the proverbial "analysts" on Wall Street had predicted. This means that, adding to the current stash, the Fed will have shifted onto its books about \$1 trillion of the debt that the Treasury Department has manufactured. That's in addition to \$1.25 trillion more in various assets backed by mortgages that the Fed is keeping in its till (not including AIG and other backing) from the 2008 crisis days. This ongoing bailout of the financial system received not a mention in pre- or postelection talk. No one in Congress or the White House gets a say on the maneuver. Yet, it was the Fed buying more treasuries, and not the fact that the Republicans gained control of the House, that caused the Dow to shoot to a 2010 high and bank stocks to rally 2 percent on average.

Like many other Americans, as the results of the elections were pouring in for insta-analysis I was obsessively flipping cable TV channels. It didn't matter whether I landed on Fox, CNBC or MSNBC, the same two main items were being debated: (1) the tea party's rise and (2) the other victorious Republicans (including the ones labeled as tea party candidates—even though they did not actually run as candidates of a separate party, a trick that progressives have never managed to pull off or even try).

All the Republicans sang their refrain from the same song sheet, vowing to work on extending George W. Bush's tax cuts, killing what they refer to as Obamacare, cutting spending (though none gave specific details as to how) and, of course, getting Americans back to work. The catch—and this was a notion taken up by President Barack Obama and ignored by the Fed the very next day—is that the Republicans wanted to do so the free-market way, by reducing government constraints on businesses so they can stop worrying about obstacles like rules, and thus somehow spontaneously start hiring more. (Note: To underscore this strategy, CNBC paraded a bunch of chief executive officers on screen throughout the election night.)

But, for the most part, the Republicans left the so-called financial reform bill alone as a topic, except to make it clear, as incoming House Majority Whip (aka 2012 contender) Eric Cantor did, that they don't want onerous regulations (it is much better to wait for the next leg of this crisis and the loss of more jobs and homes, apparently, than to bar Wall Street from financial innovation).

Here's what wasn't mentioned during the election or postelection chatter: the cost and logic of bailing out, subsidizing and now propping up Wall Street as it heads decisively (despite Obama's promises of those days of fill-in-the-blank being over) to another year of record bonuses.

No winning Republican mentioned repealing the financial reform bill, since it doesn't really actually reform finance, bring back Glass-Steagall, make the big banks smaller or keep them from creating complex assets for big fees. Score one for Wall Street. No winning Democrat thought out loud that maybe since the Republican tea partyers were so anti-bailouts they

should suggest a strategy that dials back ongoing support for the banking sector as it continues to foreclose on homes, deny consumer and small business lending restructuring despite their federal windfall, and rake in trading profits. The Democrats couldn't suggest that, because they were complicit. Score two for Wall Street.

In other words, nothing will change. And that, more than the disillusionment of his supporters who had thought he would actually stand by his campaign rhetoric, is why Obama will lose the White House in 2012.

Then, there's the Fed. Ben Bernanke, who like Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has survived two administrations under different parties to have a hand in bailing out the banking system and fictitiously stabilizing the markets, continues to run the country into the path of massive debt in the name of easing money, so as to avoid the Second Great Depression from which Obama thinks he saved us (along with Geithner and former Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson).

Last Wednesday morning, Obama had the chance to at least attempt to re-engage the voters who believed in his mantra of change. In his contrition speech, he took responsibility (read: apologized) for having made it seem he extended government too much (thereby taking on the language of the Republican opponents), explaining that we were in an emergency situation (not that the banks screwed up and stole the life rafts). He assured businesses he was still on their side (in case the fact that he's keeping Wall Street lackey Geithner on and his ringing praise for Larry Summers on "The Daily Show" weren't sufficient signs).

It is likely that, going forward, Democrats will fear losing more seats in 2012 and vote more with the pro-bank center. That would be a mistake for them and bad for the country.

Yet sadly, Obama showed pre-emptive signs of capitulation with two words: free market. Toward the end of the Q&A session after his speech, Obama said that the free market has to be "nurtured and cultivated" and that he has to take responsibility to make clear to the business community and the country that the most important thing we can do is boost and encourage our business sector and make sure that companies are hiring. His facial expression was as hollow as his words. He added that "we" have been talking to CEOs constantly (and don't we all feel good about that?)-and that on his trip to Asia this week his whole focus will be on opening up markets, so "we can prosper, sell more goods and create more jobs in the United States" (that playbook comes from Bush Treasury Secretary Paulson, but that policy has been shown only to enable CEOs to outsource more, not less). He also pointed out that a whole bunch of corporate executives will join "us."

And that is the second reason he will not be re-elected: Businesses won't need to fund his next campaign when they can fund the Republicans now that they are back in vogue. Businesses will meanwhile just extract what they can as long as they can, like better deals abroad in the name of free markets-the kind that the Fed is subsidizing back here at home. Obama and his supporters will see this in 2012 if they don't now. The president could go all out and ignore the CEOs and focus on the general populace, but signs point to the contrary. If he has learned something from the November elections about loyalty to his voters, he isn't showing it. So maybe progressives should stop defending him and start yelling at him ... or seriously look for another 2012 candidate to run against Sarah Palin.

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Monday, November 8, 2010

Gary Younge: The "Tea Party" Does Not Exist

The "Tea Party" Does Not Exist

The Tea Party is not new, or coherent. It's merely old whine in new bottles

by Gary Younge [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 8, 2010 | The Guardian/UK | CommonDreams

Lectures about fiscal responsibility from the occupants of a plush suite on the 20th floor of one of the fanciest hotels in Las Vegas stick in the craw like a slice of cantaloupe swallowed sideways. Appropriately, the Tea Party Express's open bar, trays of fruit and skyline view at the Aria hotel on election night smacked more of a corporate event than a political, let alone a populist, one.

At one stage I turned to a man standing next to me and asked if he was a Tea Party supporter. "No," he said. "I was hoping you were." He was a state department official who had brought some foreign journalists in the hope of meeting some real Tea Party supporters to interview. But they couldn't find any. There is a reason for that.

The "Tea Party" does not exist. It has no members, leaders, office bearers, headquarters, policies, participatory structures, budget or representatives. The Tea Party is shorthand for a broad, shallow sentiment about low taxes and small government shared by loosely affiliated, somewhat like-minded people. That doesn't mean the right isn't resurgent. It is. But the forces driving its political energy are not those that underpinned its recent electoral success.

The Tea Party is not a new phenomenon. It's simply a new name for an old phenomenon - the American hard right. Over the last two years the term has provided a rallying point for a coalition of disparate groups, most of which have been around for many years. Minutemen (anti-immigrant vigilantes), birthers (who deny that Obama was born in the US), Promise Keepers (Conservative Christian men), Oath Keepers (military and police, retired and current, who vow to resist unconstitutional government "by any means necessary"), Fox News watchers, Glenn Beck lovers and Rush Limbaugh listeners who had no unifying identity before.

Having a name helps. It has offered a political identity to a significant number of people who were either not active or might not have understood themselves to be in any way connected. That name has helped reorient the stated priorities of the right away from social issues and towards fiscal ones. But this is no more than the old whine in new bottles.

Most of the characters now closely associated with the Tea Party are not new to rightwing politics. They have just moved from the margins to the mainstream. Sharron Angle, the failed Senate candidate from Nevada, has held state office since 1998. While in the 42-member state assembly she voted no so often on consensual matters that such votes were sometimes referred to as "41-to-Angle". The much-maligned Delaware Tea Party candidate, Christine O'Donnell, stood unopposed in the Republican primary in 2008 before going on to challenge Joe Biden. These people didn't join the Tea Party, the "Tea Party" term attached itself to them.

It is difficult to imagine a candidate earning the Tea Party label who is not against gay marriage or abortion, for the simple reason that no such candidate could exist. White Christian evangelicals still formed one of the most crucial bedrocks of last week's Republican success - comprising 25% of the electorate and giving 79% of their vote to the GOP. That's far more clout than black and Latino votes combined give the Democrats .

At first the term Tea Party helped us understand the insurgent, inchoate force that took to the streets last year; now it may be hindering analysis of its more choreographed march to power. For when people ask what the Tea Party will do, talk about Tea Party demands, or lay down Tea Party threats, they mistake (wilfully or otherwise) the Tea Party for a coherent formation with power of cohesive action. It's not.

Research conducted over several months by the Washington Post to contact every Tea Party group in the country found that many did not exist. Seventy per cent said they had not been involved in a political event in a year - a year in which the Tea Party was credited with transforming the nation's politics.

"When a group lists themselves on our website, that's a group," Mark Meckler, a founding member of the Tea Party Patriots, told the Post. "That group could be one person, it could be 10 people, it could come in and out of existence - we don't know."

This is less of a criticism than a description. Movement-building is hard, messy work that, if it is to be truly at grassroots level, produces uneven results. In that sense it's no different from, say, the anti-war movement, and would have been about as successful were not it for two key factors.

The first is that the Tea Party has its own "news" channel - Fox - devoted to its growth. It promotes Tea Party demonstrations as though they are events of national celebration and showcases those who pose as its leaders as though they are national celebrities. Second, it has money. A lot of it. When it comes to elections it has the backing of huge amounts of money from private corporations and individuals who are behind institutions - like the Tea Party Express, Freedomworks, Americans for Prosperity and Tea Party Patriots - which are run by people with a proven track record of rightwing Republican activism.

The relationship between these organisations and the base of people who call themselves Tea Party supporters is episodic and erratic. They show up in different places where they sense an opportunity for a breakthrough, throw money at it, attract media attention for it, and then see what sticks. Sometimes it works, sometimes it backfires - mostly it makes barely any difference. They have no organic, let alone democratic, relationship with the grassroots that they claim, in some way, to represent. Sarah Palin, for example, endorsed 64 candidates this season. Half of them won last Tuesday; 10 lost in the primaries, 19 lost in the general elections, and three races are still too close to call. Her support is important, but hardly decisive.

It would be too easy to deduce from this that the Tea Party is simply a creation of big business and the rightwing media. Neither, alone, can explain the 50 or so conservative old men who have met at the Nugget Casino in Pahrump, a hard-scrabble town in rural Nevada, every Friday for the last five years, or most of the other groups I have seen around the country. It would also be too naive to suggest that such groups would boast anything other than a marginal presence without big money and media to amplify their voices.

What we witnessed on Tuesday was not a realignment of American politics but the first real test of the reconfiguration of the balance of forces in the American right. Exit polls show an electorate even more polarised than two years ago, where registered independents swung to Republicans but self-described moderates continued to back the Democrats. Sixty per cent of the seats that the Democrats lost were in districts where John McCain beat Obama in 2008.

Last December I interviewed Rand Paul, after he addressed about 12 people in a small town in Leitchfield, Kentucky, and asked what the Tea Party meant to him. "I call it the national open mic movement," he joked. "It's kind of good in a way. Some people were tired of not being able to speak their piece. But I don't think it has a cohesion yet. It's yet to be seen whether it can transform itself."

Back then Paul was a rank outsider; now he is a senator-elect. The Tea Party still has no cohesion, but it has been transformed. Not from the inside or below, but from the outside and above. Its name reflects a popular mood, its actions reflect an elite capability.

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I'd Be Glad to Join the Tea Party, If...

The movement needs to broaden its attack on the corporate-political ruling class

by Dan Rodricks [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Of Irony and Implosion

by David Michael Green [article link](#)

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Chris Hedges: A Recipe for Fascism

A Recipe for Fascism

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 8, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams

American politics, as the midterm elections demonstrated, have descended into the irrational. On one side stands a corrupt liberal class, bereft of ideas and unable to respond coherently to the collapse of the global economy, the dismantling of our manufacturing sector and the deadly assault on the ecosystem. On the other side stands a mass of increasingly bitter people whose alienation, desperation and rage fuel emotionally driven and incoherent political agendas. It is a recipe for fascism.

More than half of those identified in a poll by the [Republican-leaning](#) Rasmussen Reports as "mainstream Americans" now view the tea party favorably. The other half, still grounded in a reality-based world, is passive and apathetic. The liberal class wastes its energy imploring Barack Obama and the Democrats to promote sane measures including job creation programs, regulation as well as criminal proceedings against the financial industry, and an end to our permanent war economy. Those who view the tea party favorably want to tear the governmental edifice down, with the odd exception of the military and the security state, accelerating our plunge into a nation of masters and serfs. The corporate state, unchallenged, continues to turn everything, including human beings and the natural world, into commodities to exploit until exhaustion or collapse.

All sides of the political equation are lackeys for Wall Street. They sanction, through continued deregulation, massive corporate profits and the obscene compensation and bonuses for corporate managers. Most of that money-hundreds of billions of dollars-is funneled upward from the U.S. Treasury. The Sarah Palins and the Glenn Becks use hatred as a mobilizing passion to get the masses, fearful and angry, to call for their own enslavement as well as to deny uncomfortable truths, including global warming. Our dispossessed working class and beleaguered middle class are vulnerable to this manipulation because they can no longer bear the chaos and uncertainty that come with impoverishment, hopelessness and loss of control. They have retreated into a world of illusion, one peddled by right-wing demagogues, which offers a reassuring emotional consistency. This consistency appears to protect them from the turmoil in which they have been forced to live. The propaganda of a Palin or a Beck may insult common sense, but, for a growing number of Americans, common sense has lost its validity.

The liberal class, which remains rooted in a world of fact, rationalizes placating corporate power as the only practical response. It understands the systems of corporate power. It knows the limitations and parameters. And it works within them. The result, however, is the same. The entire spectrum of the political landscape collaborates in the strangulation of our disenfranchised working class, the eroding of state power, the criminal activity of the financial class and the paralysis of our political process.

Commerce cannot be the sole guide of human behavior. This utopian fantasy, embraced by the tea party as well as the liberal elite, defies 3,000 years of economic history. It is a chimera. This ideology has been used to justify the disempowerment of the working class, destroy our manufacturing capacity, and ruthlessly gut social programs that once protected and educated the working and middle class. It has obliterated the traditional liberal notion that societies should be configured around the common good. All social and cultural values are now sacrificed before the altar of the marketplace.

The failure to question the utopian assumptions of globalization has left us in an intellectual vacuum. Regulations, which we have dismantled, were the bulwarks that prevented unobstructed brutality and pillaging by the powerful and protected democracy. It was a heavily regulated economy, as well as labor unions and robust liberal institutions, which made the American working class the envy of the industrialized world. And it was the loss of those unions, along with a failure to protect our manufacturing, which transformed this working class into a permanent underclass clinging to part-time or poorly paid jobs without protection or benefits.

The "inevitability" of globalization has permitted huge pockets of the country to be abandoned economically. It has left tens of millions of Americans in economic ruin. Private charity is now supposed to feed and house the newly minted poor, a job that once, the old liberal class argued, belonged to the government. As [John Ralston Saul](#) in "The Collapse of Globalization" points out, "the role of charity should be to fill the cracks of society, the imaginative edges, to go where the public good hasn't yet focused or can't. Dealing with poverty is the basic responsibility of the state." But the state no longer has the interest or the resources to protect us. And the next target slated for elimination is Social Security.

That human society has an ethical foundation that must be maintained by citizens and the state is an anathema to utopian ideologues of all shades. They always demand that we sacrifice human beings for a distant goal. The propagandists of globalization-from Lawrence Summers to Francis Fukuyama to Thomas Friedman-do for globalization and the free market what Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky did for Marxism. They sell us a dream. These elite interpreters of globalism are the vanguard, the elect, the prophets, who alone grasp a great absolute truth and have the right to impose this truth on a captive people no matter what the cost. Human suffering is dismissed as the price to be paid for the coming paradise. The response of these propagandists to the death rattles around them is to continue to speak in globalization's empty rhetoric and use state resources to service a dead system. They lack the vision to offer any alternative. They can function only as systems managers. They will hollow out the state to sustain a casino capitalism that is doomed to fail. And what they offer as a solution is as irrational as the visions of a Christian America harbored by many within the tea party.

We are ruled by huge corporate monopolies that replicate the political and economic power, on a vastly expanded scale, of the old trading companies of the 17th and 18th centuries. Wal-Mart's gross annual revenues of \$250 billion are greater than those of most small nation-states. The political theater funded by the corporate state is composed of hypocritical and impotent liberals, the traditional moneyed elite, and a disenfranchised and angry underclass that is being encouraged to lash out at the bankrupt liberal institutions and the government that once protected them. The tea party rabble, to placate their anger, will also be encouraged by their puppet masters to attack helpless minorities, from immigrants to Muslims to homosexuals. All these political courtiers, however, serve the interests of the corporate state and the utopian ideology of globalism. Our social and political ethic can be summed up in the mantra *let the market decide. Greed is good.*

The old left-the Wobblies, the Congress of Industrial Workers (CIO), the Socialist and Communist parties, the fiercely independent publications such as Appeal to Reason and The Masses-would have known what to do with the rage of our dispossessed. It used anger at injustice, corporate greed and state repression to mobilize Americans to terrify the power elite on the eve of World War I. This was the time when socialism was not a dirty word in America but a promise embraced by millions who hoped to create a world where everyone would have a chance. The steady destruction of the movements of the left was carefully orchestrated. They fell victim to a mixture of sophisticated forms of government and corporate

propaganda, especially during the witch hunts for communists, and overt repression. Their disappearance means we lack the vocabulary of class warfare and the militant organizations, including an independent press, with which to fight back.

We believe, like the Spaniards in the 16th century who pillaged Latin America for gold and silver, that money, usually the product of making and trading goods, is real. The Spanish empire, once the money ran out and it no longer produced anything worth buying, went up in smoke. Today's use in the United States of some \$12 trillion in government funds to refinance our class of speculators is a similar form of self-deception. Money markets are still treated, despite the collapse of the global economy, as a legitimate source of trade and wealth creation. The destructive power of financial bubbles, as well as the danger of an unchecked elite, was discovered in ancient Athens and detailed more than a century ago in Emile Zola's [novel "Money."](#) But we seem determined to find out this self-destructive force for ourselves. And when the second collapse comes, as come it must, we will revisit wrenching economic and political tragedies forgotten in the mists of history.

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Sunday, November 7, 2010

[**Robert A Bows: Fascism American-Style: How to Hold Them Accountable**](#)

Fascism American-Style: How to Hold Them Accountable

By Robert A Bows [article link](#)

November 5, 2010 | OpEdNews

"Of course we will have fascism in America but we will call it democracy." --Huey Long

"Fascism is not defined by the number of its victims, but by the way it kills them." --Jean-Paul Sartre

"Fascism ought to more properly be called corporatism since it is the merger of state and corporate power." --Benito Mussolini

The masters of the electronic voting machines have spoken

Preliminary analysis of exit polls (for senatorial and gubernatorial races) reported immediately after voting ended compared with the announced vote results show a statistically significant shift in favor of Republican candidates, the odds of which are about a million to one. [1]

This electronic theft is nothing new, but in the aftermath of this year's Supreme Court (5 to 4) decision giving the green light to unlimited campaign contributions, the blatancy is impressive. The strategy is simple: leverage the bottomless slush fund of corporate dollars and flood the nation's airwaves and mailboxes to twist enough minds to tighten the electoral races, so that those who control the software to the electronic voting machines can create the illusion of right-wing electoral success.

It's time to consider what can be done to drop the curtain on this charade and the policies that result from this illegitimate elevation of corporate shills to executive, legislative, and judicial office.

The American brand of fascism

There are as many varieties of fascism as there are examples, beginning with Germany (Hitler) and Italy (Mussolini) during the period leading up to and including WWII, followed by Cuba (Batista), Spain (Franco), Paraguay (Stroessner), Nicaragua (Somoza), and Chile (Pinochet), et al.

The brand of fascism currently practiced in the United States by European and North American financiers and bankers--who control a major portion of the world's money supply, as well as the dominant military and intelligence apparatuses--has commonalities with many of its predecessors as well as a few important differences.

Commonalities include: control over the state by unelected persons ("the hidden government," as Teddy Roosevelt called them) or persons whose election is predetermined (through control of the currency, media, and voting process); use of intelligence and security forces to suppress opposition; abrogation of constitutional guarantees and international legal conventions; the justification of torture; and false flag events used to justify imperialism, to name a few.

As so eloquently expressed by U.S. Supreme Court Justice [Robert Jackson](#), the chief prosecutor of the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials following World War II, we must hold such behavior accountable:

If certain acts and violations of treaties are crimes, they are crimes whether the United States does them or whether Germany does them. We are not prepared to lay down a rule of criminal conduct against others which we would not be willing to have invoked against us.

We are now prepared to invoke these rules of criminal conduct and align the crimes of U.S. fascism with the indictments at Nuremberg:

1. Participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace (9-11, WMDs, etc.)
2. Planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace (Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.)
3. War crimes (Abu Ghraib, recent WikiLeaks, and attacks on civilians)
4. Crimes against humanity (massive Iraqi and Afghani civilian deaths and torture, plus ongoing state-sanctioned terrorism: 9-11, Gulf, 2008 economic contraction and refusal to replenish the money supply; sabotage of property and contract law [mortgage crisis])

But it is the differences between the American brand of fascism and previous iterations--particularly the illusion of choice and dissent (what social theorist Herbert Marcuse called "repressive desublimation")--that confuse many people into believing that the U.S. is simply a republic with democratic processes gone awry. This has led a range of critics to describe the situation as "inverted totalitarianism," "participatory fascism," "corporatism," or just "monopoly capitalism."

While each of these descriptions applies to a degree, the partial truths to which they call attention unnecessarily obscure the simple nature of the beast. Perhaps it is the erroneous notion that fascism equals Nazism (actually, the term originally referred to Mussolini's regime) that compels otherwise analytical people to deny what is going on here ("good Germans," all). But lack of intellectual rigor is no excuse to mislabel the ruthless abuses to which the world is being subjected. As Orwell so eloquently taught us, the price of removing, destroying, or distorting words and their meanings is that we lose our ability to know what freedom is.

Consider how one of our own presidents defined fascism:

The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism -- ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power. --Franklin D. Roosevelt [2]

Gone are the abstract notions of the state as an embodiment of some ethnic or racial or historical ideal (our rulers are multicultural, at least at the level of government employees and the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; the upper echelons of our intelligence services are another story); instead, the state is simply a catalyst for corporate policy. Today's corporate state makes no attempt to legitimize itself even theoretically, as the Italian syndicalists did, by pretending that collective bargaining takes place between management and labor. Premeditated expansion and contraction of the currency is used to steal assets (the fruits of our labor) at fire sale prices. In the U.S., earnings per share for the stockholders and the maintenance of power by the financial elites are the main objectives implemented by illegal means through the so-called "legal" state.

Everything, including the ecology and sustainability of the planet and its inhabitants, is sacrificed to the Almighty Dollar and for profit therein. Oddly, those aligned in this lockstep greedy march often see themselves as religious, or even spiritual! Perhaps they do not understand that Judeo-Christian tradition does not support the idolatry of money (currency) or commodities, such as gold or silver.

It's easy to miss this point, given the disinformation spread by so-called religious leaders; regardless, you may recall that Moses had to break and restore the Israelites' covenant with G-d because of some tribal members who, in his absence, manufactured and worshipped the Golden Calf; and Jesus reiterated this principle when he said, "You cannot worship God and mammon." The lack of self-awareness over such misplaced obeisance (regardless of the religion to which they may or may not subscribe) renders our materialistic brethren oblivious to the immoral nature of their own behavior.

What to do?

Irrespective of the origins of their debilitation, these fascists, who place money and corporate interests above people, must be held accountable for their crimes, however daunting the task may be of facing up to a monolithic and morally blind cartel that controls most of the currency and guns on our planet. Even the most corrupt and devolved regimes come to an end. But the hour is late; so, how to hasten a new organizational paradigm?

Such was the question for Carol Brouillet, when she invited a dozen or so fellow activists to a retreat following the "Deep Politics Conference" in Santa Cruz, California, in May 2010. Brouillet explains:

"I hoped that the retreat would give us more time to think deeply about the roots of the problems that humanity faces today, and generate insights on how we could individually and collectively empower ourselves to assist in the conscious evolution necessary for us to survive, grow, mature, and thrive, in alignment with our spirits, which yearn for truth, beauty, peace, justice, health, not only for ourselves, but for all people and all life forms."

As one might expect, the debate was heated, but the group was comprised of enough veteran organizers, some going back to the Free Speech Movement and the Vietnam War in the '60's, that a solution was hammered out. As it happened, they chose to model their appeal on the Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. -- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- *That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government."*

The Details of Accountability

Even though most of those assembled recognize that the current regime (the money cartel or so-called New World Order) has totally abrogated the Declaration of Independence (and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights) and that the social contract has been broken, the group decided in hopes of eventual accountability-- such as took place with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa to compile a list of grievances, as the signers of the Declaration did over 234 years ago. The group also offers solutions aimed at building alternative forms of organization that will be the framework for

a sustainable and just world, to supplant the current system when it collapses from the weight of its intrinsic contradictions and lies (which, as Jefferson put it, run contrary to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God").

The result is the [Declaration of Accountability](#), in which the group declares, much like the document upon which it is modeled, "the causes which impel them to the separation." In addition to the grievances listed in the Declaration, the Problems and Proposed Solution section includes "[Financial Accountability](#)," "[Electoral Accountability](#)," "[Media Accountability](#)," "[Corporate Accountability](#)," "[Legal Accountability and the Rule of Law](#)," "[9-11 Accountability](#)," "[Gulf Accountability](#)," etc.).

Like those who have survived the continuing holocausts and war crimes around the globe, the group hopes to keep alive the collective memory of the ongoing crimes against humanity until such time that the perpetrators are brought to justice. According to Brouillet:

"I believe by signing the Declaration of Accountability, we are asserting people power over the abusive tyranny of corporations, illegitimate institutions, the deceptions and lies that for too long have paralyzed and confused people, and we consciously enable and empower ourselves to challenge the Era of Impunity and launch a new era of responsibility, in which we reclaim our future and manifest our dreams and hopes for a better world."

The group formally launched its website this October, with a list of prominent individual and organizational signers. As the author of the Declaration of Independence wrote:

"All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent." --Thomas Jefferson.

Be a witness for accountability.

[1] Josh Mitteldorf, "[The Scoop on Election Theft 2010](#)," OpEdNews.com, 11/3/10, .

[2] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Appendix A: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Recommendations Relative to the Strengthening and Enforcement of Anti-trust Laws," *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 32, No. 2, Part 2, Supplement, Papers Relating to the Temporary National Economic Committee (Jun., 1942), pp. 119-128, and "Anti-Monopoly," *Time* magazine, May 9, 1938.

About the author:

Robert Bows is a television producer/writer/director, playwright, theatre reviewer, political economist, instructional designer, yogi, metaphysician, and pseudonymous author of www.SolomonsProof.com and [Solomon's Proof: A Psycho-Spiritual Journey to World Consciousness](#) . He participated in the "Deep Politics Conference" referenced in the article and is one of the drafters of the [Declaration of Accountability](#), as well as one of the editors documenting ongoing abuses.

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Saturday, November 6, 2010

Patrick Martin: Obama, Republicans Prepare for Joint Assault on American Workers

Obama, Republicans Prepare for Joint Assault on American Workers

by Patrick Martin [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 4, 2010 | WSWS | Global Research

In back-to-back press conferences Wednesday, the day after sweeping Republican gains in the 2010 midterm election, victorious Republican Party leaders and Democratic President Barack Obama took their first tentative steps towards an open political partnership directed against the American working class.

The man who will become speaker of house in January, Ohio Republican Congressman John Boehner, made an appearance on Capitol Hill, flanked by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi, chairman of the Republican Governors Association.

All three repeated bromides about listening to the American people and following their lead, although the policies they support—slashing social programs such as Social Security, Medicare, education and unemployment compensation, and further tax breaks for the rich—are overwhelmingly opposed by the population.

Boehner was conciliatory in his demeanor, calling on the Obama White House and congressional Democrats, who still control the Senate, to work together with the new Republican majority in the House for a “smaller, less costly and more accountable government in Washington, DC.”

McConnell was more belligerent, declaring, “We’ll work with the administration when we agree with it and confront it when we don’t.” But he said, “it’s clear that we’ll have to have some kind of bipartisan agreement” on spending cuts, adding, “We anticipate enough Democrats will support this to make progress.”

Barbour issued the clearest call for across-the-board cuts in spending, saying, “In state government, we’ve learned to make real cuts, and we hope that will be an example to the new Congress.”

The calls for spending restraint and “smaller” government apply only to the programs that provide assistance to working people, the sick and the elderly. No Republican congressional leader favors cuts in spending on the military or the gargantuan tax subsidies to Wall Street and the wealthy.

On the contrary, Boehner and McConnell both reiterated their support for an extension of the Bush administration tax cuts for the wealthy, which are due to expire December 31. An extension has been held up by the dispute between the White House, which wants to limit the cuts to those making \$250,000 a year or less, and the congressional Republicans, with considerable Democratic support, who want the tax cuts continued without any income ceiling, at the cost of \$800 billion.

At his press conference an hour later, President Obama made it clear that he was open to the Republican approach, pledging bipartisan cooperation to cut spending and repeatedly suggesting areas of “common ground,” such as energy policy, education and tax cuts for investment.

Obama blamed the Democratic Party rout in the election on the dismal state of the US economy, particularly the widespread concern over the lack of jobs and high unemployment. But he proposed absolutely nothing to create jobs except more tax breaks for business, while offering to listen to any measures the Republicans might propose.

In an echo of the statements of an earlier Democratic president, Bill Clinton, after his party lost control of Congress in 1994, Obama asserted his continued relevance, declaring, “no one party will be able to dictate where we go from here” and expressing his desire to sit down with Boehner and McConnell.

In a comment that is particularly significant coming on the eve of a long trip to Asia, including a G20 economic summit in South Korea, Obama said, “The most important contest we face is not the contest between Democrats and Republicans. In this century, the most important competition we face is between America and our economic competitors around the world.”

This suggests an appeal to the Republicans to join forces for an aggressive program of economic nationalism to promote the interests of American corporations against their international rivals. A key element in the Obama administration’s campaign for “export-led” growth is to lower the wage levels of American workers so that American corporations can become more competitive in the world market.

In response to repeated questions about whether the election represented a repudiation of his administration’s policies, Obama would concede only that the US economy had so far failed to generate enough jobs for the rapidly growing number of unemployed, although he claimed to have “stabilized the economy” and produced “job growth in the private sector.” He added, “But people all across America aren’t feeling that progress. They don’t see it.”

In a clear olive branch to his right-wing opponents, Obama embraced their rhetoric against “big government.” He said that in the course of his first two years in office, with crisis interventions in the banking system, the auto industry and health care, “I think people started looking at all this and it felt as if government was getting much more intrusive into people’s lives than they were accustomed to.”

It is notable that neither Obama nor his Republican opponents classify government spying, wiretapping, secret prisons or assassination orders—all the trappings of a police state—as “big government.” What the Republicans demonize is the slightest government restriction on the activities of giant corporations, banks and wealthy individuals to plunder and exploit working people.

Obama pointed to the bipartisan deficit commission he appointed in March, which is to submit proposals next month for cuts in entitlement programs such as Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, as well as possible consumption taxes on the working class.

He also touted his embrace of accelerated depreciation rules for business, so companies “get a huge tax break next year,” citing this as “an idea that business groups and Republicans I think have supported for a very long time.”

Obama concluded with a paean to the capitalist market that could have been given by newly elected Republican Senator Rand Paul, declaring, “The reason we’ve got a unparalleled standard of living in the history of the world is because we’ve got a free market that is dynamic and entrepreneurial, and that free market has to be nurtured and cultivated.”

What “unparalleled standard of living” is Obama talking about? American workers who are facing levels of poverty, unemployment and social misery unprecedented in three-quarters of a century might respond with an impolite gesture.

The president wanted above all to reassure corporate America that he had learned his lesson from the election and would never again speak ill of Wall Street, no matter what crimes are committed by the bankers and CEOs. Citing the financial crash, the scandal of huge executive bonuses, and the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, he said, “I think business took the message that, well, gosh, it seems like we may be always painted as the bad guy.”

This extraordinary apology to those who have wrecked the US and world economy, despoiled the environment, and destroyed the livelihoods of tens of millions of working people demonstrates the complete subservience of both parties and all of official Washington to the ruling financial aristocracy.

Patrick Martin is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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It Was the Banks

by James K. Galbraith [article link](#)
November 5, 2010 | CommonDreams
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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:59 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Friday, November 5, 2010

Paul Craig Roberts: The Impotence of Elections

The Impotence of Elections

Americans out of work, out of income, out of homes, out of hope... .

by Dr. Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#)
November 4, 2010 | Global Research

In his historical novel, The Leopard, Giuseppe di Lampedusa writes that things have to change in order to remain the same. That is what happened in the US congressional elections on November 2.

Jobs offshoring, which began on a large scale with the collapse of the Soviet Union, has merged the Democrats and Republicans into one party with two names. The Soviet collapse changed attitudes in socialist India and communist China and opened those countries, with their large excess supplies of labor, to Western capital.

Pushed by Wall Street and Wal-Mart, American manufacturers moved production for US markets offshore to boost profits and shareholder earnings by utilizing cheap labor. The decline of the US manufacturing work force reduced the political power of unions and the ability of unions to finance the Democratic Party. The end result was to make the Democrats dependent on the same sources of financing as Republicans.

Prior to this development, the two parties, despite their similarities, represented different interests and served as a check on one another. The Democrats represented labor and focused on providing a social safety net. Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, unemployment insurance, housing subsidies, education, and civil rights were Democratic issues. Democrats were committed to a full employment policy and would accept some inflation to secure more employment.

The Republicans represented business. The Republicans focused on curtailing big government in all its manifestations from social welfare spending to regulation. The Republicans' economic policy consisted of opposing federal budget deficits.

These differences resulted in political competition.

Today both parties are dependent for campaign finance on Wall Street, the military/security complex, AIPAC, the oil industry, agri-business, pharmaceuticals, and the insurance industry. Campaigns no longer consist of debates over issues. They are mud-slinging contests.

Angry voters take their anger out on incumbents, and that is what we saw in the election. Tea Party candidates defeated Republican incumbents in primaries, and Republicans defeated Democrats in the congressional elections.

Policies, however, will not change qualitatively. Quantitatively, Republicans will be more inclined to more rapidly dismantle more of the social safety net than Democrats and more inclined to finish off the remnants of civil liberties. But the powerful private oligarchs will continue to write the legislation that Congress passes and the President signs. New members of Congress will quickly discover that achieving re-election requires bending to the oligarchs' will.

This might sound harsh and pessimistic. But look at the factual record. In his campaign for the presidency, George W. Bush criticized President Clinton's foreign adventures and vowed to curtail America's role as the policeman of the world. Once in office, Bush pursued the neoconservatives' policy of US world hegemony via military means, occupation of countries, setting up puppet governments, and financial intervention in other countries' elections.

Obama promised change. He vowed to close Guantanamo prison and to bring the troops home. Instead, he restarted the war in Afghanistan and started new wars in Pakistan and Yemen, while continuing Bush's policy of threatening Iran and encircling Russia with military bases.

Americans out of work, out of income, out of homes and prospects, and out of hope for their children's careers are angry. But the political system offers them no way of bringing about change. They can change the elected servants of the oligarchs, but they cannot change the policies or the oligarchs.

The American situation is dire. As a result of the high speed Internet, the loss of manufacturing jobs was followed by the loss of professional service jobs, such as software engineering, that were career ladders for American university graduates. The middle class has no prospects. Already, the American labor force and income distribution mimics that of a third world country, with income and wealth concentrated in a few hands at the top and most of the rest of the population employed in domestic services jobs. In recent years net new job creation has been concentrated in lowly paid occupations, such as waitresses and bartenders, ambulatory health care services, and retail clerks. The population and new entrants into the work force continue to grow more rapidly than job opportunities.

Turning this around would require more realization than exists among policymakers and a deeper crisis. Possibly it could be done by using taxation to encourage US corporations to manufacture domestically the goods and services that they sell in US markets. However, the global corporations and Wall Street would oppose this change.

The tax revenue loss from job losses, bank bailouts, stimulus programs, and the wars have caused a three-to-four-fold jump in the US budget deficit. The deficit is now too large to be financed by the trade surpluses of China, Japan, and OPEC. Consequently, the Federal Reserve is making massive purchases of Treasury and other debt. The continuation of these purchases threatens the dollar's value and its role as reserve currency. If the dollar is perceived as losing that role, flight from dollars will devastate the remnants of Americans' retirement incomes and the ability of the US government to finance itself.

Yet, the destructive policies continue. There is no re-regulation of the financial industry, because the financial industry will not allow it. The unaffordable wars continue, because they serve the profits of the military/security complex and promote military officers into higher ranks with more retirement pay. Elements within the government want to send US troops into Pakistan and into Yemen. War with Iran is still on the table. And China is being demonized as the cause of US economic difficulties.

Whistleblowers and critics are being suppressed. Military personnel who leak evidence of military crimes are arrested. Congressmen call for their execution. Wikileaks' founder is in hiding, and neoconservatives write articles calling for his elimination by CIA assassination teams. Media outlets that report the leaks apparently have been threatened by Pentagon chief Robert Gates. According to Antiwar.com, on July 29 Gates "insisted that he would not rule out targeting Wikileaks founder Julian Assange or any of the myriad media outlets which reported on the leaks." [article link](#)

The control of the oligarchs extends to the media. The Clinton administration permitted a small number of mega-corporations to concentrate the US media in a few hands. Corporate advertising executives, not journalists, control the new American media, and the value of the mega-companies depends on government broadcast licenses. The media's interest is now united with that of the government and the oligarchs.

On top of all the other factors that have made American elections meaningless, voters cannot even get correct information from the media about the problems that they and the country face.

As the economic situation is likely to continue deteriorating, the anger will grow. But the oligarchs will direct the anger away from themselves and toward the vulnerable elements of the domestic population and “foreign enemies.”

Paul Craig Roberts is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:42 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Billy Wharton: Where Is Everybody? Election Money Flows In 2010 But Voters Stay Home](#)

Where Is Everybody? Election Money Flows In 2010 But Voters Stay Home

By Billy Wharton [article link](#)

November 05, 2010 | Countercurrents

While all eyes were placed firmly on Tea Party electoral breakthroughs such as Rand Paul in Kentucky, other disturbing trends also developed behind the scenes of this round of elections. This was the first election since the Supreme Court decision that reversed the limits on corporate campaign donations by affirming corporate personhood. The money did certainly flow in 2010 and it served to shape the outcome of at least some of the elections. Ominous unnamed sources funded dozens of attack ads in contested races, Political Action Committee (PAC) funds flowed freely and the unions continued their failed strategy of footing the bill for the Democratic Party. The sheer scale of the spending combined with restrictive ballot access laws, served to further drown out independent candidates. Voters responded by staying home.

Money, Money, Money

Overall spending increased rapidly in 2010. The Center for Responsive Politics (CRP) reports that more than \$4 billion, or the annual GDP of Mongolia, was spent on this election. The Supreme Court decision on corporate personhood seems to have had the biggest impact on outside spending. Outside spending relates to activities such as the purchases of election ads, making phone calls for candidates and other electoral activities on behalf of candidates. Spikes in outside spending normally occur during presidential years and then wane in by-elections. Until this year.

CRP tallies of outside spending show it surging in 2010 to nearly \$300 million, a level equal to the heavily financed presidential election of 2008. In a reversal of 2008, Conservative concerns outspent Liberal ones by nearly two to one. Much of the Conservative money, some \$32 million, was funneled through Chambers of Commerce in support of Republican candidates. Who did this spending is still unknown, as contributors evaded or delayed disclosure of their contributions.

One race that attracted serious money was the hotly contested Colorado Senate race in which Democrat Michael Bennet squeaked by Republican Ken Buck by less than 1% of the vote. Bennet spent more than \$10 million on the race and received more than \$1 million from a Democratic Party PAC. The outside spending was equally remarkable. Nearly \$6 million was spent on advertisements opposing Bennet and another \$2.4 million to support Buck. The total spending in this race amounted to around \$34 million, a figure equal to the monthly GDP of Caribbean island-nation of Dominica.

Unions: The Definition of Insanity

Albert Einstein's definition of insanity is useful when evaluating the role of unions in elections. Einstein understood insanity as “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” If you think of the trade unions as people, they are in serious need of mental counseling. They keep on doing the same thing, supporting the Democrats, with

the same results, working people get screwed. This time, the strategy of the union leadership was to do this same thing again, but on a much grander scale.

Union leaders took advantage of the new rules by avoiding the annoying formality of setting up a separate fund for campaign donations. This year they spent directly from member's dues. And, boy did they spend. The Service Employees International Union and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees alone spent about \$37 million in outside spending on electoral races. Union money flowed throughout the country with little affect on policy proposals – the Democrats are still firmly committed to budget cutting or in Washington-speak “restructuring entitlements.”

The folly of union electoral politics was most clearly on display in the race for Governor in New York State. Here, Democratic candidate Andrew Cuomo left the heavily union-financed Working Families Party (WFP) twisting in the wind for weeks. The WFP offered their endorsement, but Cuomo refused, thereby putting the group's ballot line in jeopardy. Cuomo eventually relented, but forced WFP officials to sign off on his proposals to cut the state budget – including cutbacks on unionized public workers! With the WFP politically neutered, Cuomo went on an embarrassing media offensive against public employees unions targeting them for concessions. Though the WFP kept its ballot access, it sold its soul and with it the last progressive cover for the trade union's suicidal Democratic Party insider strategy.

Unintended Consequences

Things did not work out exactly as planned on Tuesday. Though big-moneyed interests did manage to shape some outcomes, the trend toward self-financed mega-rich candidates took a hit. This is not entirely negative as long as the inane notion that fueled it - that these candidates were too rich to give in to special interests – dies along with it.

The CRP reports that only 1/5 of the 58 Federal level candidates who contributed at least \$500,000 to their own campaigns achieved victory. The rest faced spectacularly expensive defeats. The poster-child for this reversal was Republican Senate Candidate in Connecticut Linda McMahon. McMahon coughed up more than \$46 million in profits from her wrestling empire yet still came up empty.

While self-financed narcissists were going down in flames, there were also some small signs of grassroots resistance. In New York, thousands of disaffected progressives and independents found their way to Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins. Hawkins' vote total of more than 57,000 surpassed previous Green efforts and secured permanent ballot access for the party. Simultaneously, in Ohio, Socialist Party USA candidate for Senate Dan LaBotz captured the attention of more than 27,000 voters. Though LaBotz and the Socialists were practically starting from scratch in the state, they managed to present socialist politics in a manner that drew some amount of attention. Both Hawkins and LaBotz bucked the money trends as they ran their campaigns on the cheap and got the most out of small individual contributions.

Where is Everybody?

Despite all the money spent. Despite all the attack commercials. Despite the unrelenting reports on 24/7 political news channels, the American people still did not turn out to vote. The United States Election Project reports that the average turn out was around 41%. Heavily contested races peaked out just above 50% while other states hovered around the high 30's. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that turnout among African-American voters was far lower than the 2008 Presidential election. Overall, for the entire country, people just stayed home.

The explanation for all this is exceedingly simple. Save the moralistic homilies about the duty of people to vote. The American people get at least one part of the problem. There are no significant choices offered at the ballot box. There is a basic agreement between the Democrats and Republicans over issues ranging from budget cuts, to free trade, to military strategy and expenditures. No amount of well-financed public relations can effectively dress up this agreement as difference. The American voters know this, so they stay home.

The next step, of course, is to build that alternative. This process is likely to take place primarily outside of the electoral arena. With the Obama Deficit Commission preparing to issue a report in December that is widely expected to propose dramatic cutbacks in public programs such as Social Security and Medicare, there will be plenty of issues to organize

around. Protest politics will come back to the US. Whether this reappearance will be represented in the electoral arena remains to be seen. Certainly, thanks to the Supreme Court decision on corporations, there will be powerful interests lining up to prevent such manifestations.

Billy Wharton is a writer and activist whose articles have appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *NYC Independent*, *Spectrezine* and the *Monthly Review Zine*. He can be reached at whartonbilly@gmail.com

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America Is Now Officially for Sale

It's the Tea Party spirit distilled: pose as the champion of Joe America, while actually ripping him off

by Johann Hari [article link](#) [article link](#)

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The GOP Recipe for Keeping the Economy Down Until Election 2012

Could it be that Republicans want to keep the economy struggling through Election Day, 2012?

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Thursday, November 4, 2010

[Jim Hightower: Who's That Hiding Behind the Tea Party?](#)

Who's That Hiding Behind the Tea Party?

by: Jim Hightower [article link](#)

November 04, 2010 | t r u t h o u t

The tea party spoke! Loudly, powerfully and proudly.

But besides, "Throw the bums out," what did it say? And now that the party part is over and the nasty business of governing begins, what does it all add up to? What's its governing agenda? How does it make anything positive out of the disparate mish-mash of issue positions within its own rank and file?

And then there's the big one -- the huge, grotesque, democracy-choking monster that the party invited into the center of its own movement: corporate money. Throughout the election, tea partiers demurely averted their eyes from this ugly dude, for

the monster was lavishing millions of corporate dollars on their candidates. But now, whether they meant to or not, they've ensconced it as the unrivaled, controlling power in the new Congress. What will they do as it asserts its selfish interests over theirs, devouring their ideals and their pretension that they are in control?

The media establishment insists on referring to the tea party as a "populist" movement -- but real populists fight corporate power, they don't hug it! The party certainly is a *popular uprising*, and a successful one, but there's nothing populist about it. Indeed, its leaders and candidates have vociferously opposed the populist ideals of egalitarianism, social justice, cooperative action and the common good.

"Shrink the Government" sounds good as a campaign cry, but its substance, as expressed by many of the most prominent teabag nominees and electees, is to kill Social Security, privatize Medicare and Medicaid, eliminate unemployment compensation, strip away the regulatory reforms on Wall Street's big banks, undo the EPA and the Education Department, extend the privileged tax breaks of super-wealthy hedge fund speculators, cut food stamps, do away with minimum wage, cripple unions, take away the pensions of public employees ... etc., etc.

That's the anti-populist agenda, one that greatly increases corporate power over the rest of us -- and one that the new Republican speaker of the House (known as "Suntan Johnnie" Boehner for his cozy ties with top corporate lobbyists) will quietly and quickly try to advance. To the dismay of most rank-and-file tea partiers, he'll advance it in their name.

For America, this was a sad campaign, containing all the gravitas, substance and forward-looking vision of a Paris Hilton event. The positive was that lots of new energy flowed into these elections. The flow mostly sprang from anger, anxiety and anti-ism (all of which are totally understandable, given our disastrous, jobless economy and the relentless undermining of our middle class).

Sadly, however, neither the confused Democrats nor the fused tea party-Republicans even addressed the economic source of the people's anger and anxiety. Dems mostly said, "Stick with us, for they're worse," and Repubs merely retorted, "We're not them."

This reduced the election to a massive, despicable blitz of TV ads consisting of lies, shameless pandering and silliness. It was America's first \$4 billion election, with the likes of the Koch brothers, Rupert Murdoch, the Chamber of Commerce, Karl Rove, Dick Armey and other designers of corporate rule secretively channeling unprecedented, unconscionable (and, I believe, unconstitutional) sums of cash directly from corporate coffers to create a House majority obligated and dedicated to them.

Among the saddest results is that instead of throwing the bums out, voters in many cases threw the bums in. One example is Ron Johnson, a multimillionaire plastics manufacturer who is a knee-jerk, right-wing ideologue. He used his own fortune and nearly 3 million from out-of-state corporate front groups to run ugly and defeat Sen. Russ Feingold -- a true maverick and one of the genuinely independent and most principled voices in Washington.

The tea party says that it is rebelling against big government, just as the Sons of Liberty did in 1773, when they tossed boxes of British-owned tea from three British ships docked in Boston Harbor. But that particular act of defiance was not against the government of King George III. The ships were owned by the British East India Trading Co., a despised corporation that routinely engaged in the economic repression of the colonies.

It is the modern extension of this repressive corporate power that today's tea party groups must confront if they're going to make any real difference.

National radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and author of the book, [Swim Against The Current: Even A Dead Fish Can Go With The Flow](#), **Jim Hightower** has spent three decades battling the Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That Ought To Be - consumers, working families, environmentalists, small businesses, and just-plain-folks.

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David DeGraw: The Midterm Election Further Demonstrates The Need for Revolution

The Midterm Election Further Demonstrates The Need for Revolution

by David DeGraw [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 4, 2010 | AmpedStatus | Global Research

The Obama referendum came in and he got what he deserved. When you run on change and leave the same criminals in positions of power and don't hold anyone accountable for obvious crimes, and allow them to continue to commit those crimes, you deserve to lose your power. This is what happens when you put Tim Geithner and Larry Summers in charge of the economy, and support Ben Bernanke for reconfirmation as Chairman of the Federal Reserve. This is what happens when you keep Robert Gates as your Secretary of Defense and General Petraeus in charge of your wars. This is what happens when you lie to protect the interests of BP over the American people. This is what happens when you bailout Wall Street and the health care industry and sell out everyone else. This is what happens when your rhetoric is the opposite of your actions. The past two years have clearly exposed Obama as a spineless corporate puppet and he deserves to be voted out in 2012.

Now, don't get me wrong, most of the people who were just voted into office are just as bad, if not worse, as hard as that is to believe. This election marks the third straight time that the American public dramatically voted out the people who were in power. The fact of the matter is that these people are not voting for politicians that they like as much as they are voting against politicians they hate. Hopefully by 2012 the American public will finally understand that they must support Independent candidates and alternative political structures, and cannot vote for Democrats or Republicans, if they ever want to achieve the needed change. Both parties serve the same corporate masters. Yes, there are some differences between the two. The Democrats serve half of the top economic one percent, and the Republicans serve the other half. We have Neo-liberals to the left and Neo-cons to the right, leaving [99% of us](#) without representation.

And the saddest part of all, the system is now so rigged via campaign finance, lobbying and the revolving door that it is almost impossible for people who represent us to even get into office, let alone stay in office and enact policies that will bring change. Two politicians in Congress who actually fought for us against the [Economic Elite](#) just lost their reelection bids. Alan Grayson and Russ Feingold lost because record amounts of cash went to funding the candidates who ran against them. Even their own party's leadership didn't support their reelection efforts. The bottom line in this money rigged system is that you cannot run against the most powerful corporations and win. They will just pour unlimited funds into defeating you, and your own party will desert you.

The truth that many so called "Independent" news outlets will not tell you is that this government is now beyond repair. You won't hear many calls for Revolution because even the more "Independent" news outlets are dependent on the two-party system. It is absurd that these outlets still play into the obsolete Republican versus Democrat dynamic. The only reason why they do it is because they are dependent on grants from foundations and political organizations that will not fund them unless they bow to Democrats and bash Republicans, or vice versa.

I can speak from personal experience. I've lost a vital grant to fund my work because I wasn't willing to focus my attention on blaming Republicans for our problems. Our problems are a result of the two-party system. When you engage in bashing one party in favor of the other, you become a pivotal cog in the machine that is killing our country. I will not be part of the disease. The stakes are too high now. America is burning and both parties are pouring gasoline all over it.

Most Americans have only a vague understanding of the collapse that we have been set up for. If you think the past two years were bad, they were just a warm up to what is coming our way. After analyzing the policies in place and the current political environment, I can assure you that the next two years will be worse than the previous two. 52 million Americans have already been driven into poverty, 30 million are in need of work, millions of American families have been foreclosed

upon and the inequality of wealth is the most severe it has ever been in the history of the United States. And this is just the beginning phase of the decline. Millions more will be added to these totals and the social safety-nets that have held our society together are breaking down. Cuts to vital social programs are going to be severe across the board.

Our paid-off government is not going to fix our problems, they are making them worse. Don't you think it's time for you to start representing yourself? Don't you think it's time for you to start defending your family's interests?

These are questions that I've already asked myself and deeply considered. I made my decision and have dedicated myself to building a wide-ranging network of alliances across the political spectrum and have drafted a [common ground platform](#) that we are building off of. I've analyzed power politics very closely over the years. I know how the game is played and I know [who our enemies are](#). I'm going to do everything I can to end the two-party oligopoly.

I'm not saying that you should follow me. I'm saying that it's time for YOU to lead. It's time for YOU to get involved. Build your own army. Once you start paying attention and put in some time to do the research, you will clearly see for yourself that both parties are working against your interests. You will also see how critical the situation is and realize that you can no longer be passive and expect to keep living a healthy and secure lifestyle. We are going to be tested in ways we have never been tested before. We cannot get away with being apolitical anymore. It's time for us to pay attention, to become directly involved in the decision-making processes that guide our life. I know this is something that most people don't enjoy and don't want to do, but the consequences of our inaction will be much worse than anything we have ever experienced.

Yes, I sound extreme, but these are extreme times. I'm not going to sit quietly as our future is ripped out from under us. I will not let my family's well being and our country's fate be decided by short-sighted greed addicted forces that have looted the global economy and brought poverty, death and destruction throughout the world.

I see the path we are on and I intend to change it!

It is evident that the overwhelming majority of the population has become cynical and feels that it is useless to try to change things. If these people would just realize that they are the overwhelming majority and take action, we can change things. We have power in numbers. We are 99% of the population. If we organize on [common ground](#) and fight back, we will win!

David DeGraw is the founder and editor of [AmpedStatus.com](#). He is the author of The [Economic Elite Vs. The People of the United States of America](#), and his forthcoming book is [The Road Through 2012: Revolution or World War III](#).

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Stephen Lendman: US Elections: America's Right Turn

US Elections: America's Right Turn

By Stephen Lendman [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 04, 2010 | Stephen Lendman | Countercurrents

Since the 1980s, neoliberalism dominated US politics under Democrats and Republicans. Bush I continued Reagan policies. Clinton hardened them. Bush II much more, and Obama so far matched Star Trek, going where no administration went before. Count the ways. They're manifold, favoring business over popular interests, yet he's accused of being socialist.

On November 2, angry voters responded, shifting right despite favoring many left of center issues, a combination of outrage and angst overriding their best interests. Go figure because what they got will incense them more.

During hard times, election cycles repeat a common pattern. Angry voters throw out bums for new ones, discarding them next time around for still more, mindless of what an earlier article explained - that US democracy is fake. The criminal class in Washington is bipartisan. Mock elections pretend to be real. The process is mere kabuki theater run by political consultants and PR wizards, supported by major media misreporting, featuring horse race issues, not real ones.

Everything is pre-scripted. Secrecy and back room deals substitute for a free, fair and open process. Party bosses chose candidates. Big money owns them. Key outcomes are predetermined, and cheated voters get the best democracy money can buy, each time no different than others.

Recall November 2008. Promising change after eight George Bush/Republican dominated years, Obama won the most convincing non-incumbent victory in over 50 years, sweeping Democrats to large majorities in both houses.

On election night, the mood celebrated hope for progressive change, an end to imperial wars, and a new day for America. When word came around 10PM, expectant thousands in Chicago's Grant Park erupted with chants of "yes we can," hoping Obama would deliver at a time of deepening economic duress. Two years later, disappointment, disillusion, frustration, and anger erupted over promises made, then broken, once again betting new faces will govern better than old ones. Think again.

New York Times writers took the lead reporting it, Jeff Zeleny and David Herszenhorn, for example, headlining, "Restive Voters Divide Power in Congress as GOP Surges to Control of House," saying:

They also came close in the Senate "as discontented voters, frustrated about the nation's continuing economic woes, turned sharply against President Obama just two years after catapulting him into the White House." It showed in how they "indiscriminately ousted Democratic incumbents who loyally supported Mr. Obama's agenda," decidedly anti-populist whether or not they know it.

Times writer Carl Hulse headlined "Republicans Oust(ed) Old and New Democrats Alike," throwing out babies with their bath water. It's what usually happens in hard times, especially when big money effectively manipulates minds, pushing them right, not left, that means over the cliff through planned austerity when massive stimulus and much more are needed.

Universal single-payer healthcare for one. Taking money out of politics another. Holding real elections, not fake ones. Giving Congress back what the Constitution's Article 1, Section 8 mandates - the power to create money and control the value thereof, not Wall Street bankers using it to their advantage. They delivered hard times, transferring wealth from the majority to themselves. Obama and Congress support them, Republicans as guilty as Democrats.

The best Times writer Peter Baker could say was "Somewhere along the way, the apostle of change became its target, engulfed by the same currents that swept him to the White House two years ago." Instead of denouncing his shameless betrayal, he said only that he "must find a way to recalibrate with nothing less than his presidency on the line."

Shifting right, not left, is what he means, what Clinton called triangulation. Obama earlier promised austerity, more favors for business, hardline immigration policy, deficit reduction, continued imperial wars without saying it, and more for privilege, not people, buying into Reagan's "trickle down" economics, what, Bush I called "voodoo."

All a Times editorial could do say is that "voters....sent President Obama a loud message: They don't like how he's doing his job, they're even angrier at Congressional Democrats." Republicans exploited it "turning out their base....Democrats....fail(ing) to rally their own." Besides noting a shift right, hard issues weren't mentioned, instead saying "his opponents (were able) to spin and distort what Americans should see as genuine progress in very tough times."

For Wall Street, defense contractors, Big Oil, and other corporate favorites perhaps, not Main Street that drove voters for change. What's coming, however, will infuriate them, what no major media report will explain. For example:

- greater than ever military spending;
- expanded wars, perhaps to new theaters at a time most Americans want them ended;
- privatizing Social Security and Medicare, letting Wall Street racketeers exploit them for profit, scamming the public at the same time;
- privatizing public education as well as increasingly at the university level;
- trashing labor rights;
- hanging American workers out to dry;
- ignoring growing millions facing foreclosure;
- letting poverty and unemployment spiral out of control;
- yet eliminating unemployment compensation and other social benefits, saying they're "unaffordable;" tax cuts for the rich, however, will be maintained;
- enacting more police state laws on top of many in place; and
- turning America darker, a reactionary direction pitting bread and butter issues against ruling elites, both parties offering bipartisan support, especially new incumbents and their leadership.

The big money backing them demands it, assuring they'll get what they bought. It's how US politics works, more than ever delivering the best democracy money can buy. As a result, American workers are on their own, out of luck, and unsupported by both parties. Democrats are no different than Republicans.

As a result, governance in America is dysfunctional. The electorate remains mindless to reality. Only grassroots activism might change things, sweeping all the bums out, electing progressive independents, reversing repressive and corporate friendly laws, as well as enacting a new constitution by national referendum, letting the electorate decide, not states or Washington.

A utopian vision? Absolutely, adopting working class France's 1968 slogan, "Be realistic, Ask for the Impossible" through collective political action, the only way "impossible" goals ever are reachable, social justice topping the list.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago and can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. Also visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com and listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the [Progressive Radio News Hour](#) on the [Progressive Radio Network](#) Thursdays at 10AM US Central time and Saturdays and Sundays at noon. All programs are archived for easy listening.

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The Party of Organized Money

by Robert C. Koehler [article link](#)

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Rich Media, Poor Democracy

by Amy Goodman [article link](#) [article link](#)

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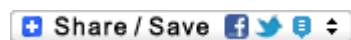
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What Obama Can Learn from the Social Movements That Changed the World

By Ruth Rosen [article link](#)

November 4, 2010 | AlterNet

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Wednesday, November 3, 2010

Patrick Martin: Republicans Win Sweeping Victory In US Congressional Election

Republicans Win Sweeping Victory In US Congressional Election

By Patrick Martin [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 3, 2010 | WSWS | CounterCurrents

With many results still being counted or too close to call, the US congressional elections have produced a sweeping victory for the Republican Party, which regained control of the House of Representatives, gaining as many as 60 seats, and cut into the Democratic margin in the Senate.

Incumbent Senate Democrats Russell Feingold of Wisconsin and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas were defeated, and Republicans took open Senate seats in Pennsylvania, North Dakota and Indiana. The Republican candidate was leading early Wednesday in the contest for Barack Obama's former Senate seat in Illinois.

In the House of Representatives, Republicans took at least four seats from Democrats in New York, two in New Hampshire, one in New Jersey, five in Pennsylvania, five in Ohio, two in Michigan, two in Indiana, three in Illinois, and two in Wisconsin, for a net gain of 26 seats in the industrial Northeast and Midwest. The Republicans also captured at least 15 Democratic-held seats in the South, including three each in Florida, Virginia and Tennessee, and two in Georgia and Mississippi.

Some longstanding congressional Democrats lost their seats, including House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt in South Carolina, Appropriations subcommittee chairman Rick Boucher in the coal-mining region of Virginia, and Ike Skelton of Missouri, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Republican candidates won the lion's share of the 39 state governorships, taking control of Democratic-held statehouses in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Tennessee and New Mexico, while retaining Republican-held statehouses in Florida, Texas and Georgia. The Democrats retained New York and Massachusetts and were leading in Illinois and California.

The electoral debacle is a devastating indictment of the Obama administration and the Democratic Party. Two years after an overwhelming victory in the presidential election, four years after the Republicans lost control of both the House and the Senate, the right-wing policies of the Democrats have created the conditions for a massive comeback by the Republicans.

The corporate-controlled media and the representatives of the two big business parties are already proclaiming that the outcome of the election demonstrates that the American people have shifted to the right, embracing the "free market" nostrums of the Republican Party and the right-wing Tea Party movement.

This contention is both stupid and ludicrous. According to these political "experts," in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, with unemployment near double-digit levels, millions facing foreclosure, and the poverty rate skyrocketing, the American people have decided that they favor eliminating unemployment compensation, cutting Social Security, closing public schools and slashing taxes for the rich.

Exit polls demonstrate that, far from a surge of popular support for the Republicans, the outcome was determined by a collapse in the vote among those who voted most heavily for Obama and the Democrats in 2006 and 2008. While young voters, those 18 to 29, comprised 18 percent of the vote in 2008, they made up only 10 percent of those who turned out at the polls on Tuesday. Those over 65 comprised 15 percent of the vote in 2008, but 24 percent of the vote in 2010.

The elderly shifted sharply against the Democratic Party in large measure because of the reactionary character of the Obama health care "reform." Far from being a progressive measure to extend health care to the uninsured, the Obama plan was primarily a cost-cutting measure that many of the elderly regarded, quite correctly, as a threat to Medicare benefits. While 48 percent of the elderly voted Republican in 2008, this figure jumped to 58 percent in 2010, one of the largest swings among any demographic group.

The collapse of support for the Democrats was the product of two years of betrayal of the illusions promoted in the 2008 campaign. The Democratic victories in 2006 and 2008 were fueled by popular hostility to the Bush administration's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Obama appealed to these sentiments in order to get elected, but once in office he continued the same militarist policies, even keeping on Pentagon chief Robert Gates and General David Petraeus, and pouring another 70,000 troops into Afghanistan.

From the beginning, Obama disavowed any effort to hold Bush officials responsible for the blatant illegality of the wars, for torture and other war crimes, or for the attacks on democratic rights undertaken as part of the "war on terror." Obama intensified domestic spying, kept the Guantanamo Bay detention camp open, backed renewal of the Patriot Act, and declared that the commander-in-chief had the right to order assassination of American citizens.

On economic policy, Obama brought in figures identified with Wall Street like Timothy Geithner and Lawrence Summers to be his chief aides. He combined solicitude for the banks with scarcely concealed indifference to the plight of the working class. Obama moved heaven and earth to continue the bailout of Wall Street begun under Bush, while rejecting any job-creation measures by the federal government and describing unemployment as merely a "lagging economic indicator."

In the month leading up to the midterm election, the White House seemed to go out of its way to alienate the youth and workers who turned out in 2008 to vote for Obama, who ran as the candidate for "change" and "hope." The administration opposed a moratorium on foreclosures despite revelations about banks fabricating documentation, lifted the ban on drilling in the Gulf of Mexico imposed after the BP disaster, and promoted more tax breaks for business in the name of "job-creation."

Tuesday's electoral rout will be bemoaned by Obama's liberal apologists, from the editorial board of the New York Times to the Nation, who will join in blaming the American people for having "moved to the right." In reality, the election has exposed the Democratic Party for what it is: an alliance of a part of the financial aristocracy with a privileged and complacent section of the upper middle class, a social category that includes the trade union bureaucracy.

Establishment liberalism is concerned about lifestyle issues and identity politics, but is utterly distant from the needs of the working people who are the vast majority of the population. It has moved so far to the right that the economic program of Obama and that of the incoming House Speaker John Boehner and the Republicans differs only on minor details.

Coming out of the election, Obama will renew the drive towards bipartisanship with which he began his administration, going out of his way from the moment of his election to rehabilitate a completely discredited Republican Party. All the "compromises" that he proposes will amount to acceptance of Republican demands for deeper reductions in social spending as well as further tax cuts and other concessions to corporate interests.

Republican leader Boehner declared that his new majority in the House of Representatives constitutes the "voice of the American people." The truth is that the Republican victory sets the stage for a direct confrontation between the working class and the most reactionary sections of the American ruling elite.

In this conflict, the working class will find a way forward only through a resolute and implacable break with bankrupt liberalism and the Democratic Party and the building of a new and independent mass political movement based on a socialist program.

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Now That The Elections Are Over, What Kind of Economy Did Americans Vote For?

by Danny Schechter [article link](#)

November 3, 2010 | Global Research

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Dems Take a Pounding in the Mid-Terms: Progressives Not Bold Enough, Says Caucus Leader

By Adele M. Stan [article link](#)

November 3, 2010 | AlterNet

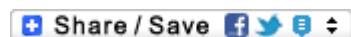
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Bloodbath; The USA Repudiates Obama, Emanuel, Bluedogs, The DLC, DNC, Pelosi, Reid, Dodd... Good Riddance!

By Rob Kall [article link](#)

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Tuesday, November 2, 2010

Butler Shaffer: Can Liberty Be Advanced Through Violence?

Can Liberty Be Advanced Through Violence?

by Butler Shaffer [article link](#)

November 1, 2010 | LewRockwell

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.
~ Albert Einstein

A Republican candidate running for Congress in Texas has set many minds and mouths atwitter with his suggestion that, should state tyranny ever become a problem in America that could not be resolved by political means, the use of violence, while "not the first option," would be "on the table." There is a deep-rooted frustration and anger among millions of Americans directed at the entirety of a political establishment that is forever employing lies, deceit, contradictory reasoning, violence, increased regulatory and taxation schemes, Federal Reserve monetary policies, wars, expanded police and surveillance powers, and other practices that advance corporate-state interests at the expense of ordinary people. Those upset with such behavior have tried resorting to the politically-acceptable means of bringing about change. They have gone to voting booths to support candidates who promise to "get the government off your backs," or "no more taxes," or to not engage in "nation-building." With but a handful of exceptions, those elected turn around and violate such promises, leaving the disenchanted voters to seek out other political saviours at the next election.

The current "Tea-Party" movement began as yet another expression of popular disaffection with our politicized society. It was, however, quickly co-opted by the same right-wing franchise of the political establishment that participated – in bipartisan efforts with its left-wing branch – in the construction of the modern empire. Just as in the 1994 Republican Party's congressional victories, persons of libertarian sentiments will discover that dressing a Tea-Party candidate in a three-cornered hat will not change his fundamental character as a pimp for the prevailing order.

When the futility of using institutionally-approved methods for making change become increasingly evident to people, it is not surprising that many might look to violence as the only effective solution. Students of social psychology often speak of the "frustration/aggression" hypothesis, wherein a repeated interference with goal-directed activity may result in a resort of violence. As Fred Berger expressed it, where

certain segments or groups within the population are systematically exposed to these weaknesses in the ability of the legal system to provide or protect security, those subjected to such treatment come to feel "left out" of the social process, come to regard themselves as the "victims" of the social and political scheme, rather than full participants in it. . . . Such conditions tend to foster counter-violence and retaliatory disorder. . . .

In a world in which it has become evident to so many that the institutional order exists to promote the interests of the few at the expense of the more numerous, is it so remarkable that such an awareness would be responded to with anger and violence? To regard oneself as being endlessly at the mercy of increasingly malevolent forces that one is otherwise unable to control or resist, can produce a sense of hopelessness that may lead to violence directed against its perceived source.

How is one to respond to the systemic violence that is the lifeblood, the very essence, of the state? Society has always been a struggle between the "invisible hand" of a peaceful and productive order that arises, without direction, as the unintended consequence of people pursuing their own interests, and the "iron fist" of institutionally structured violence we have been conditioned to equate with "social order." I have defined "government" as "an institution of theft, predation, rape, destruction, and mass murder, the absence of which, it is said, would lead to disorder."

To understand political systems, and to learn how to protect oneself when dealing with them, one must cast aside all of the illusions and lies in which we have been trained to see them. They are defined, even by students of government, as agencies "enjoying a monopoly on the use of violence within a given territory." There is nothing, *nothing*, that the state ever does that does not derive from a presumed authority to employ whatever amount of deadly force its officials deem necessary – or

just convenient – to achieve its ends. Contrary to the mantle of "public servant" in which they like to cloak themselves, government employees – from the president on down to janitors – insist upon their power to compel obedience by force.

The mainstream media and high-ranking government officials have been feigning righteous indignation over the city officials in Bell, California, who paid themselves gargantuan salaries – one as high as \$800,000 per year, and with retirement pay nearing \$1,000,000 annually. What is most upsetting to such critics, however, is not the enormity of their racket, but that these local officials failed to conform themselves to established methods for the looting of taxpayers. Like the Claude Rains police chief in the movie, [Casablanca](#), who informs Humphrey Bogart that he is "shocked to discover gambling" going on in his business – as he receives his gambling payoff from the croupier – the town government of Bell will receive a selective criticism of its behavior. Government defense contracts; hundreds of billions of dollars in "stimulus" gifts to favored business interests; the refusal of the Federal Reserve system – or of Congress – to reveal the beneficiaries of its monetary policies, these and other politically-correct forms of looting will pass without significant comment from right-thinking people. Nor, in contrast with the Bell racket, will much be made of the fact that a current candidate for governor in California has spent \$141.5 *million* of her own money in an effort to get elected. Why? As one who understands that people act in order to be better off *after* acting than they would have been otherwise, what returns does this woman expect from her investment? Who is insisting upon an explanation from her?

I have long been of the view that parents have a moral obligation to keep their children from living under tyranny. As such, how do I go about the task of helping to make their world one in which they may enjoy the conditions of peace and liberty? My experience convinces me that participation in electoral politics is more than *futile*: it only adds energy to the system; it confirms the central premise of all political thinking, namely: important change can occur only within the halls of government. Besides the fact that the electoral process is unavoidably rigged in favor of the status quo, it also assures that, no matter who you vote for, the *government* always gets elected. Voting is designed to give people the false sense that *they* are in control of the machinery and the policies of the state. Emma Goldman got it right when she said that "if voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal."

My opposition to voting arises from the same sense as my opposition to other forms of violence. Implicit in efforts to persuade the state to act according to your preferences – whether through voting, lobbying, or threats of force – is the idea that, should you prevail, others will be compelled to abide by what you have chosen for them. Voting is anything but the peaceful alternative to violence: it is premised on the coercive machinery of the state being employed on your behalf should you prevail in amassing a greater number of people on your side than do others.

More direct forms of violence – as some suggest to be the ultimate solution to statism – is likewise inconsistent with a condition of liberty. Violence is an expression of reactive anger, born of unrequited frustration. Violence is the very essence of the state: can one expect mankind to free itself of political destructiveness by adopting its very essence?

We will not become free when the state goes away. Rather, the state will go away once we are free. "Freedom" is a very personal quality, wherein the individual enjoys a centered, integrated life, free of the conflicts and contradictions that make up our normally neurotic lives. We must learn to respect the inviolability of one another's lives and other property interests if we are to enjoy this inner sense of being free. A need for *liberty* is what we have in common with one another, but we will only grasp this fact when each of us is *free* of the inner forces that keep us divided and in conflict.

We have conditioned our minds to think of ourselves in conflict-laden ways, be they nationalistic, religious, racial, gender, or other forms of separation. Our political masters have trained us to think of one another in "we/they," "us" against "them" categories, divisions that are – like the scapegoats upon whom we play out our conflicts – changeable to suit the political needs of the moment. The fear of unseen "communists" that helped fuel the Cold War, has morphed into the concealed "terrorists," with each serving the same purpose: to expand the power and plundering of the state. Only by our individual ending of such divisive thinking and discovering the inner sense of non-contradictory wholeness that respects the inviolability of our neighbors' lives and interests, can we become free.

"Liberty," on the other hand, is the condition in which free men and women can live together in society. Trying to twist or manipulate *unfree* people into social systems – even those grounded in a *verbal* support of liberty – will never foster liberty. This is why the Constitution was doomed from the start: there was too much conflict and contradiction in the minds of most

people to allow for the assemblage of free men and women. It is also why, once we have discovered the inner meaning of freedom, constitutions – and the governments they create – will be wholly unnecessary for a condition of liberty. This is part of the meaning of F.A. Harper's observation that "the man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free."

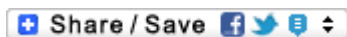
How can a person whose mind and conduct is grounded in a divisive thinking that considers violence as a means to wholeness, be regarded as "free"? Free of *what*? Is it not evident that resort to violence can never be a means to liberty; that such methods presume a fundamental separation of interests that would reduce society to the Hobbesian dystopia of "all against all"? If a group sought to dismantle the state by violent means, is it not clear that it could accomplish such ends only by amassing coercive powers superior to the state itself; that it would have to become a *super*-state? And if this group were to be successful, it would dare not dismantle its *own* machinery, lest another group sought to recreate the previous apparatus; it would have to remain diligent in policing the thinking and actions of others who might be inclined to favor a more structured society.

One can no more advance liberty through violence than he can regain sobriety by embracing an alternative brand of alcohol. *The state is a system that enjoys a monopoly on the use of violence.* It is no answer to this destructive menace to introduce a competitor who employs the same means and seeks the same ends, namely, to construct society on the principle of the power to compel obedience to authority.

Albert Einstein got to the essence of the problem when he declared that "force always attracts men of low morality." I understand how being frustrated by others as we pursue interests we are entitled to pursue can generate intense feelings of anger. But it is not out of reactive rage or desperation that we can discover our individual freedom and the resultant liberty we can share with our neighbors. It is such divisiveness that keeps us enslaved to the state. We need to discover what we share with one another, namely, a respect for our *individuality* that can arise only from the integration of our *rational* and *emotional* energies into a focused intelligence. If mankind is to avoid the fate of being the first species to intentionally make itself extinct, we must transform our own *minds*, and abandon our ageless and contradictory efforts to force others to be free!

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Monday, November 1, 2010

[Chris Hedges: The Phantom Left](#)

The Phantom Left

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 1, 2010 | Truthdig | OpEdNews | Truthout

The American left is a phantom. It is conjured up by the right wing to tag Barack Obama as a socialist and used by the liberal class to justify its complacency and lethargy. It diverts attention from corporate power. It perpetuates the myth of a democratic system that is influenced by the votes of citizens, political platforms and the work of legislators. It keeps the world neatly divided into a left and a right. The phantom left functions as a convenient scapegoat. The right wing blames it for moral degeneration and fiscal chaos. The liberal class uses it to call for "moderation." And while we waste our time talking nonsense, the engines of corporate power--masked, ruthless and unexamined--happily devour the state.

The loss of a radical left in American politics has been catastrophic. The left once harbored militant anarchist and communist labor unions, an independent, alternative press, social movements and politicians not tethered to corporate benefactors. But its disappearance, the result of long witch hunts for communists, post-industrialization and the silencing of those who did not sign on for the utopian vision of globalization, means that there is no counterforce to halt our slide into corporate neofeudalism. This harsh reality, however, is not palatable. So the corporations that control mass communications conjure up the phantom of a left. They blame the phantom for our debacle. And they get us to speak in absurdities.

The phantom left took a central role on the mall this weekend in Washington. It had performed admirably for Glenn Beck, who used it in his own rally as a lightning rod to instill anger and fear. And the phantom left proved equally useful for the comics Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, who spoke to the crowd wearing red-white-and-blue costumes. The two comics evoked the phantom left, as the liberal class always does, in defense of moderation, which might better be described as apathy. If the right wing is crazy and if the left wing is crazy, the argument goes, then we moderates will be reasonable. We will be nice. Exxon and Goldman Sachs, along with predatory banks and the arms industry, may be ripping the guts out of the country, our rights--including habeas corpus--may have been revoked, but don't get mad. Don't be shrill. Don't be like the crazies on the left.

"Why would you work with Marxists actively subverting our Constitution or racists and homophobes who see no one's humanity but their own?" Stewart asked. "We hear every damn day about how fragile our country is--on the brink of catastrophe--torn by polarizing hate, and how it's a shame that we can't work together to get things done. But the truth is we do. We work together to get things done every damn day. The only place we don't is here [in Washington] or on cable TV."

The rally delivered a political message devoid of reality or content. The corruption of electoral politics by corporate funds and lobbyists, the naive belief that we can somehow vote ourselves back to democracy, was ignored for emotional catharsis. The right hates. The liberals laugh. And the country is taken hostage.

The Rally to Restore Sanity, held in Washington's National Mall, was yet another sad footnote to the death of the liberal class. It was as innocuous as a Boy Scout jamboree. It ridiculed followers of the tea party without acknowledging that the pain and suffering expressed by many who support the movement are not only real but legitimate. It made fun of the buffoons who are rising up out of moral swamps to take over the Republican Party without accepting that their supporters were sold out by a liberal class, and especially a Democratic Party, which turned its back on the working class for corporate money.

Fox News' Beck and his allies on the far right can use hatred as a mobilizing force because there are tens of millions of Americans who have very good reason to hate. They have been betrayed by the elite who run the corporate state, by the two main political parties and by the liberal apologists, including those given public platforms on television, who keep counseling moderation as jobs disappear, wages drop and unemployment insurance runs out. As long as the liberal class speaks in the dead voice of moderation it will continue to fuel the right-wing backlash. Only when it appropriates this rage as its own, only when it stands up to established systems of power, including the Democratic Party, will we have any hope of holding off the lunatic fringe of the Republican Party.

Wall Street's looting of the Treasury, the curtailing of our civil liberties, the millions of fraudulent foreclosures, the long-term unemployment, the bankruptcies from medical bills, the endless wars in the Middle East and the amassing of trillions in debt that can never be repaid are pushing us toward a Hobbesian world of internal collapse. Being nice and moderate will not help. These are corporate forces that are intent on reconfiguring the United States into a system of neofeudalism. These corporate forces will not be halted by funny signs, comics dressed up like Captain America or nice words.

The liberal class wants to inhabit a political center to remain morally and politically disengaged. As long as there is a phantom left, one that is as ridiculous and stunted as the right wing, the liberal class can remain uncommitted. If the liberal class concedes that power has been wrested from us it will be forced, if it wants to act, to build movements outside the political system. This would require the liberal class to demand acts of resistance, including civil disobedience, to attempt to salvage what is left of our anemic democratic state. But this type of political activity, as costly as it is difficult, is too unpalatable to a bankrupt liberal establishment that has sold its soul to corporate interests. And so the phantom left will be with us for a long time.

Politics in America has become spectacle. It is another form of show business. The crowd in Washington, well trained by television, was conditioned to play its role before the cameras. The signs --"The Rant is Too Damn High," "Real Patriots Can Handle a Difference of Opinion" or "I Masturbate and I Vote"--reflected the hollowness of current political discourse and television's perverse epistemology. The rally spoke exclusively in the impoverished iconography and language of television. It was filled with meaningless political pieties, music and jokes. It was like any television variety program. Personalities were being sold, not political platforms. And this is what the society of spectacle is about.

The modern spectacle, as the theorist [Guy Debord](#) pointed out, is a potent tool for pacification and depoliticization. It is a "permanent opium war" which stupefies its viewers and disconnects them from the forces that control their lives. The spectacle diverts anger toward phantoms and away from the perpetrators of exploitation and injustice. It manufactures feelings of euphoria. It allows participants to confuse the spectacle itself with political action.

The celebrities from Comedy Central and the trash talk show hosts on Fox are in the same business. They are entertainers. They provide the empty, emotionally laden material that propels endless chatter back and forth on supposed left- and right-wing television programs. It is a national Punch and Judy show. But don't be fooled. It is not politics. It is entertainment. It is spectacle. All national debate on the airwaves is driven by the same empty gossip, the same absurd trivia, the same celebrity meltdowns and the same ridiculous posturing. It is presented with a different spin. But none of it is about ideas or truth. None of it is about being informed. It caters to emotions. It makes us confuse how we are made to feel with knowledge. And in the end, for those who serve up this drivel, the game is about money in the form of ratings and advertising. Beck, Colbert and Stewart all serve the same masters. And it is not us.

Chris Hedges, who writes every Monday for Truthdig, is the author of the new book "[Death of the Liberal Class](#)."

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:58 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

[Shamus Cooke: Interpreting Jon Stewart's Politics](#)

Interpreting Jon Stewart's Politics

by Shamus Cooke [article link](#) [article link](#)

November 1, 2010 | CommonDreams | Global Research

Any criticism of Jon Stewart must begin with enthusiastic praise: his Daily Show is where millions of people go for important news that is purposely ignored by the mainstream media. Consequently, both Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert have become icons of the political Left.

During the Bush administration, their shows highlighted the lies and hypocrisies used to engage in foreign wars while destroying the civil liberties in the United States; Colbert's speech at the White House Correspondence dinner - with Bush present - will go down in history as a moment of great courage and confrontation between a satiric comedian and a war criminal.

This incident, combined with the consistent exposing of lying politicians and the biased mainstream media, have earned Stewart and Colbert deep political respect.

It's in this context that their rally in Washington, D.C. - the Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear - must be viewed. Millions of people were eager to see how Stewart's and Colbert's politics would manifest themselves in a political rally. To them, the rally was not a joke. The mainstream The New York Times is correct in saying:

"...it is perhaps a measure of the volatility of American politics that a television comedy show was able to tap something deep among American voters, who turned out in the tens of thousands on Saturday to add their voices to a national political debate that some said had left them behind."

and:

"Though it was billed as a gathering for civility - a party on a sunny Saturday for people to enjoy thoughtful conversation - for participants it was a serious political affair." ([October 30, 2010](#)).

Stewart's message was not a joke either. The rally was thus far the clearest expression of his political thought. The essence his political message was conveyed by a song performed by Kid Rock and Sheryl Crow (Stewart introduced the pair's song as being in sync with the purpose of the event). The chorus of the song includes the following lyrics:

"Yelling on the left/Screaming on the right/ I'm sitting in the middle trying to live my life."

This "middle" is where Jon Stewart's politics lie, between what he sees as an unreasonable left and right-wing of the political spectrum; a theme repeated throughout the event.

Later in the rally Stewart played a video compilation of left-wing and right-wing pundits, screaming insults at their political opposites. Stewart portrays his politics as an alternative - a rational-thinking middle-ground.

To prove his moderate politics and to fend off right-wing criticism, Stewart draped American flags around the stage and had musicians perform patriotic songs, including America the Beautiful and the National Anthem.

Sadly, Stewart went overboard to prove he wasn't overly progressive, when he specifically denounced Marxists as "attempting to subvert our constitution [?] " - an example of McCarthy Red-baiting at its worse.

Stewart's rally strongly implied that instead of political conflict, everyone should join him in the reasonable political center. One of his concluding remarks was: "It's a shame we can't work together to get things done."

If only politics were that simple.

In reality, society is torn apart by economic and social inequality, dominated by giant corporations that benefit from low wages and foreign wars. These same corporations - owned by super-rich individuals - also benefit from the lies, anger, and insanity broadcast by the mainstream media. The phenomenon of scare tactics directly benefits giant corporations who want a subdued populace so they can pursue their business-friendly agenda.

Stewart does his audience a great disservice by not recognizing the profit-motive behind the right-wing fear-mongers, who are paid large salaries by corporations to divide and confuse working people. We are instead led to believe that simple "insanity" is why our mainstream media allows figures such as Bill O'Reilly, Glenn Beck, and Sarah Palin to preach hate and nonsense to millions of people.

In fact, these right-wingers are given such large venues because their politics are in line with the foreign and domestic policy interests of a number of very rich people who own TV channels and other corporations.

Stewart's rally signaled - whether consciously or not - a degree of political backpedaling on his part. During the Bush Administration, Stewart and Colbert's shows were incredibly radical, given the political circumstances; they exposed lies that cut deep into the Administration's heart. It was at this time that Stewart became globally famous, as millions around the world looked to his show to challenge the false narrative broadcast by the Bush government.

The Daily Show changed considerably when Obama became President. The criticisms became more mild mannered, even as Obama continued essentially the same policies as Bush. When Obama recently appeared on Stewart's Daily Show, not one question was asked about Obama's wars, while Obama was allowed to speak endlessly about all the great things he was doing for the country, in effect papering over his complete lack of action to create jobs.

Whether he acknowledges it or not, Jon Stewart is a political figure adored by millions on the left and ruthlessly hated by those on the right. The middle-ground that Stewart would like to base his politics on survives only in his head, and in the heads of others who would like to ignore the very real conflict between giant corporations versus tens of millions of working people.

Sides must be taken in this battle. But instead, Stewart preaches from the sidelines with a message that says, "No such battle is taking place." Unfortunately for Stewart, the politicians and mainstream media that he regularly thrashes fully embrace this perspective, for their own benefit.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for [Workers Action](#). He can be reached at shamuscook@gmail.com

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Let's Rally to Restore Peace

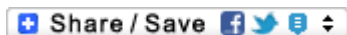
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Jon Stewart's Rally Repudiates Tea Party Madness

by Adele Stan [article link](#)
October 30, 2010 | AlterNet

Jon Stewart Rally: Just an Exercise in Gen X Self-Indulgence?

by Mark Ames [article link](#) [article link](#)
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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:50 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Sunday, October 31, 2010

Robert Jensen: Elections: The Day After

Elections: The Day After

by Robert Jensen [article link](#) [article link](#)
October 31, 2010 | Know | CommonDreams

November 2 is going to be a big day in our political lives.

But November 3 will be far more important.

On mid-term Election Day, voters will choose between candidates with different positions on health-care insurance, withdrawal from Afghanistan, and CO2 levels that drive global warming. The politicians we send to the legislatures and executive offices will make -- or avoid making -- important decisions. Our votes matter.

But Election Day is far from the most important moment in our political lives. The radical changes necessary to produce a just and sustainable society are not on the table for politicians in the Republican or Democratic parties, which means we citizens have to commit to ongoing radical political activity after the election.

I use the term "radical" -- which to some may sound extreme or even un-American -- to mark the importance of talking bluntly about the problems we face. In a political arena in which Tea Partiers claim to defend freedom and centrist Democrats are called socialists, important concepts degenerate into slogans and slurs that confuse rather than clarify. By "radical," I mean a politics that goes to the root to critique the systems of power that create the injustice in the world and an agenda that offers policy proposals that can change those systems.

In previous essays in this campaign series on [economics](#), [empire](#), and [energy](#), I argued that the conventional debates in electoral politics are diversionary because painful realities about those systems are unspeakable in the mainstream: capitalism produces obscene inequality, U.S. attempts to dominate the globe violate our deepest moral principles, and there are no safe and accessible energy sources to maintain the affluent lifestyles of the First World.

Why would politicians be unwilling to engage these ideas? Part of the answer lies in who pays the bills; campaigns and political parties are funded primarily by the wealthy, who have a stake in maintaining the system that made them wealthy. Also crucial is the ideology that pervades the dominant society; people have been subject to decades of intense propaganda that has tried to make predatory corporate capitalism and U.S. imperial domination of the world seem natural and inevitable.

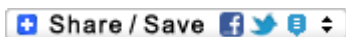
As a result of these economic and political systems, 20 percent of the U.S. population controls 85 percent of the country's wealth, and half the world's population lives in abject poverty. None of that is natural or inevitable. This inequality is the product of human choices that benefit a relatively small elite, who buy off middle- and working-class people with a small cut of the wealth. This state of affairs is the product of policies that were chosen, and can be chosen differently.

Because these crucial questions are not on the agenda for the two dominant parties battling on November 2, we have to commit to a radical citizens' agenda on November 3. The first step is building and fortifying -- both the local grassroots institutions that can work independently of the powerful, and the networks of empathy and caring that will be needed if we are to survive the fraying of the systems in which we live.

For that work, don't look to the corporate bosses or the politicians they employ. Look to the person sitting next to you.

Robert Jensen is a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin and board member of the [Third Coast Activist Resource Center](#). His latest book is [Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity](#) (South End Press, 2007). Jensen is also the author of [The Heart of Whiteness: Race, Racism, and White Privilege](#) and [Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity](#) (both from City Lights Books); and [Writing Dissent: Taking Radical Ideas from the Margins to the Mainstream](#) (Peter Lang). He can be reached at rjensen@uts.cc.utexas.edu and his articles can be found online [here](#).

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Sunday, October 31, 2010

David Michael Green: Yes, Of Course They're Brownshirts. What The Hell Did You Expect?

Yes, Of Course They're Brownshirts. What The Hell Did You Expect?

By David Michael Green [article link](#)

October 30, 2010 | OpEdNews

You know, I hate like hell using the tired old Nazi analogy.

For one thing, everybody does it, and everybody does it all the time. It hasn't exactly earned an A for originality in about a half century now.

For another thing, not only does everybody do it, but now complete idiots who couldn't pour piss out of a boot if the instructions were written on the heel are doing it too, and of course they're too dumb to even use the term properly. You can't foam at the mouth about what a freaking socialist Barack Obama is and then call him a Nazi at the same time. Unless, of course, you happen not to mind looking like a moron. Which, of course, all too many Americans don't anymore. But here's a hint to all y'all in the ganglion-cyst-where-there's-supposed-to-be-an-actual-brain crowd: Nazis hate socialists. Indeed, they murder them, along with Jews and Gypsies and homosexuals. Get it?

And then there's a third reason to avoid the Nazi analogy, namely that because everyone else is doing it, the term has now been diluted to the point of lacking all impact or meaning anymore. If everyone's a Nazi, no one is.

All good reasons not to use the term.

But, that said, there are also three good reasons to do just that.

One is that people sometimes do act like Nazis. In fact, a lot of them. Especially lately.

The second is that if you wait too long to point that out, it won't much matter anymore.

And the third is that if you wait too long to point that out, you won't be able to anyhow. Indeed, you probably won't even be. Period.

And so, with appropriate reluctance, I feel compelled to note that the wheels are coming of the wagon in America right now, and it does indeed smell all too much like a Germany-in-the-1930s kinda moment.

American politics have been driven to a fever pitch, even though no one is talking about the real problems the country faces. The radical right has induced those problems with their kleptocratic policies. They have then demonized as un-American anyone who would dare offer even the most tepid (non-)solutions to those problems. They have captured control of the legislative and executive branches of government by means of purchasing politicians wholesale. Those politicians have, in turn, appointed justices to the federal bench, such that the regressives own that institution, as well. The Supreme Court has recently handed down decisions that set aflame even the tattered legal shreds once remaining between corporate money and government power. They are doing the same at the state level. The Court even ruled that judges receiving campaign contributions from litigants appearing before their bench did not need to recuse themselves from the case. In America today it's bought legislation, bought (non-)regulation, bought (non-)justice.

Now the latest trend from our good friends on the right is to go after the 17th Amendment, that heinous bit of federal tyranny that forces the public to choose their own senators through the ballot box, rather than having (bought) state legislatures do it.

Meanwhile, the plutocratic string-pullers have marshaled massive sums of money for purposes of organizing angry white seniors into an army of Know Nothings, about to send as scary a crop of folks to Washington as have been found since... Well, you know when.

Like Joe Miller in Alaska, for instance, who wants to kill the minimum wage, and who rails against the oppressive tyranny of federal socialism, even though he and his family have taken every kind of subsidy and payment Washington has to offer. Perhaps that's part of why he started refusing to take questions about his personal background last week. Although that probably also had something to do with him not wanting to discuss the fact that he had used public office in the past to help steal elections.

Or there's Rand Paul in Kentucky, who doesn't seem to mind the prospect of hotels and restaurants posting "Whites Only" signs in their windows, and would thus be okay with repealing the Civil Rights Act. Or maybe you prefer Wisconsin Senate candidate Ron Johnson who once testified against strengthening pedophilia laws because of the potential costs to business.

Then there's Ken Buck (and four other GOP Senate candidates), who want to make abortion illegal, even in cases of rape or incest. Buck also wants to make birth control and fertility treatment illegal.

Or Jim DeMint, already in the Senate from South Carolina, who argues that unmarried sexually active women should not be allowed to teach in public schools.

Or the guy in Michigan, a sitting Congressman, who is already calling for the impeachment of Barack Obama.

Or the California candidate who wants to eliminate all public schools. Woo-hoo! No more homework!

Or Sharon Angle, who has suggested that we solve our health care crisis by just returning to the good old days of the barter system, so that patients could presumably then bring in a chicken and exchange it for an angiogram. She has also called for "Second Amendment solutions" "to protect people against a tyrannical government". In case you're somehow unsure, what that means is that if Barack Obama and Harry Reid cannot be removed from office by the ballot box, she thinks someone should pick up a gun and shoot them for the despotic crime of creating a national health care system.

Then there's Rich Iott, a congressional candidate who likes to dress up with his kids as Nazi SS officers. (Or is he actually a Nazi SS officer who sometimes dresses up as a normal person? Hard to tell with this lot, I'm afraid.)

But surely the best is Republican Senate nominee Christine O'Donnell of Delaware, who once "dabbled in witchcraft", does not appear to have had any profession in decades other than running for office, told no less than three major lies about three different educational institutions she claims to have attended, and said that "evolution is a myth" because she doesn't see monkeys evolving right before her eyes. She does have one redeeming virtue, though. She has been a long-time advocate against masturbation, which I think we can all agree is an American epidemic today, threatening our nation to its core. (You know who you are, people.)

As hysterical as this gang would be if it weren't for the fact that they're about to become the government of the world's only superpower, it's actually not funny at all.

Because even this insanity is not enough for them. This week the stomplings began in earnest.

Miller had a reporter handcuffed and "arrested" by his private security goon squad at a public rally for the crime of asking questions about the candidate's secret election-stealing past.

Meanwhile, a young female MoveOn activist at a Rand Paul rally, who was doing nothing other than carrying a sign and trying to speak to the candidate, was thrown to the ground and had her head stomped by one of his staff. This pot-bellied oaf, who seemed in the video to get off on kicking women around later actually demanded that she apologize to him. For what, I'm not sure. Getting blood on the sole of his shoes perhaps?

And just last week, the courts dismissed the appeal of several individuals who had been on the way to a public George Bush event several years ago, without intent to speak, but never got there. They were arrested as soon as they got out of their car because it had the wrong bumper sticker on it. Somehow, the Republican appointees to the appeals court could find no constitutional provision which the police's behavior might have violated. Presumably, their copy of the Bill of Rights begins (and likely ends too) with the Second Amendment. And a distorted version of that amendment, to boot.

Like decent Germans of the 1930s let alone progressive ones no doubt did, I have spent the better part of the last decade repeatedly wondering where the bottom of the barrel of stupidity, laziness, greed and criminality can be found amongst the tribe called the the American public. Each time I think, "This is it it can't possibly get worse", I am rudely reminded again of my foolishness. It's a legitimate question to ask why I continue to be so naive, but there's actually a very good answer. It's not naivete at all. It's just that I grew up in the foreign country known as mid-twentieth century America. For all its faults and it had plenty it was never like this. It's therefore not naive to think it could be that way again.

And it wasn't naive to think, two years ago, that perhaps we were headed back toward some form of basic decency, definitely a repudiation of the evils of regressivism, and maybe even a new progressive era.

Now we have instead the worst imaginable scenario. We have a society in which near-dead regressivism has been revived, only in a more virulent form. And we have a society in which progressivism, which never even remotely took the stage, has been reviled for its supposed failings.

Each election cycle just brings uglier politics and greater transgressions, rapidly approaching the fail-safe point, beyond which any democracy is unsustainable. Now comes the tea party movement, the nastiest thing to happen to America since... well, the Bush administration.

This is the crossroads. This is the moment of truth, folks. This is the test. The destructive dogs of regressivism are baying outside our door. Many of them are inside already. They will not rest until they have looted the public of every last shekel to be had, and until they have ground into submission every last avenue for the little guy to seek even a modicum of justice.

To do that, it will also be required that all pretense of democracy and civil liberty will have to be destroyed as well. It may additionally be required that wars will have to be launched, in order to simultaneously divert public attention, crush domestic opposition, steal from the weak, and stimulate the moribund economy that the kleptocracy's policies have already created.

The right hasn't got the slightest plan for solving the country's problems. That's because they haven't got the slightest interest in doing so. That is not their function, and has not remotely been their function for thirty years now. They are here to rape the maiden called America and steal from her everything of value. Once they have done so, they will leave her body in the gutter, damaged, defiled and degraded. Erik Prince has shown the path for others to follow. His mercenary company, Blackwater Worldwide, which has grown unbelievably rich helping the Bush and Obama administrations fight two wars while avoiding a draft, is for sale and its former top managers are facing criminal charges. The appropriately-named Prince himself has left the United States and moved to Abu Dhabi. Noted a friend of his, "He needs a break from America". Yeah. Just like a chronic thief needs a break from courtrooms.

But governing in the absence of actual solutions to satisfy an angry electorate will fast prove problematic for the GOP, just as it did for them in 2008. This will be the most dangerous moment for the country, the historical linchpin juncture. The public will still be clamoring for solutions, and will be ready once again to turn out the Republicans for lacking same, just as it did two years ago, and just as it's doing now to the pathetic Democrats. This cannot be tolerated by the oligarchs, of course, and a decision will have to be made whether they are bold enough to double down and burn the Reichstag,

eliminating the pesky albatross of elections once and for all. Bold enough? The folks who brought you Election 2000? The Iraq War? Legalized looting by Wall Street? A filibuster-crazed Senate?

This scenario is all possible, of course, because of the complete and utter failure in every sense of the word of the Democrats these last two years. That assessment assumes, though, that Democrats were somehow more sincere about wanting to serve the public than are Republicans. With a few rare exceptions, I don't harbor that illusion about any of them. However, I will confess that I expected them to at least seek to protect themselves and therefore do enough to get reelected. Not only have they not, they have succeeded in achieving what seemed like a miraculously improbable possibility only just a year or two ago. They have revived an opposition party that was utterly loathed and lying on death's door.

Skillful political maneuvering, combined with moderately contemporary communications strategy and even the slightest accidental wisp of intestinal fortitude would have been enough to push that party over the cliff and end its ugly reign for a couple of generations, if not forever. And, yes, that could even have been done without necessarily solving the problem of the recession right away. Just ask Franklin Roosevelt, who won four terms as president without really fixing the Great Depression. Ask FDR, that is, if he hasn't picked up his corpse and moved to Canada by now, out of sheer disgust for his country of birth and, especially, the party his efforts invigorated for half a century.

But instead of Roosevelt, we have this other guy. This Neville Chamberlain dude. I regret to say that I think history will show the crimes of Barack Obama to be of incalculable damage.

Most astonishingly, they persist even still. I've given up expecting the guy to ever grow a pair of balls. But how about just some basic sentient consciousness? You would think that after the last two years, and with the humiliating drubbing he's going to take on Tuesday, that he would at least awake enough to realize what is happening here. But no. This week I saw video clips of Obama, Joe Biden and Harry Reid three walking corpses if ever there were such talking about how hopeful they are that Republicans will grow more cooperative following this election. Say what?!?! Are these guys insane?!?! Are they on drugs?!?!

Even if they couldn't possibly figure it out for themselves, it just so happened that this very same week, Mitch McConnell and John Boehner and Mike Pence were all out there explicitly saying "There will be no compromise by Republicans in the next Congress". But it will be, of course, far worse than that. The right will be hounding Mr. Hapless Happy Face mercilessly for the next two years, investigating every bogus claim they can fabricate, and probably also running another impeachment scam. Which is likely to turn out very differently this time. Back in the 1990s, I used to say that Bill Clinton was very lucky to be impeached at a time when the economy was fat. You might have noticed that it is somewhat less so today...

George W. Bush was indisputably the worst president in American history, but now Obama is remarkably giving him a run for it. Bush poisoned the body politic, but Obama is standing by and watching it die. Obama's crimes are of incalculable historical damage for the same reason that most scholars of the presidency (used to) judge James Buchanan to have been the worst president ever. Both fiddled while the republic burned.

In Obama's case, the indictment is worse, however. First because, like Bush, he is owned by the oligarchy and serves their interests far above anyone else's. Let's please start calling this what it is: This is a case of treason, pure and simple. Second, because, unlike Clinton perhaps, he had every reason to foresee the viciousness of the last two years coming from a thousand miles away, and yet he acted like the Republican Party of Atwater and Rove and Gingrich and Limbaugh and Beck was something that could be reasoned with, something with which to negotiate. And third, because he campaigned on the premise of the audacity of hope, but instead delivered the duplicity of despair. He would be far less culpable had he not raised people's expectations so dramatically. "Yes we can!" Can what? Govern as George W. Bush's third term?

History will be very unkind to Obama, but whatever. He's virtually irrelevant at this point. He's a dead man walking, and has been right from the beginning. It all started going south even before he took office with the appointment to his cabinet of Wall Street bandits from the Robert Rubin cabal, along with other sundry regressives. But I knew it was over when at the moment of his inaugural address he skipped the opportunity to articulate a broad, bold and honest vision of the national

trajectory, and treated the record crowds who came to bear the freezing cold weather in order to be a part of history to a standard issue patchwork of platitudes instead.

Mitch McConnell said this week that his primary goal for the coming two years was to turn Barack Obama into a one-term president. Hmm. I would have thought the GOP had higher aspirations, since the Capitulation King has already taken care of that himself. If that wasn't already abundantly clear, the New York Times published some astonishing poll data the other day, documenting the extent of his party's hemorrhaging support under Obama's helm. In 2008, women (women!) voted Democratic by a 13 percent margin, and now they have swung to 4 percent in favor of Republicans. College graduates went from 2 percent Democratic to 20 percent Republican today. Catholics voted 10 percent Democratic in 2008 and are now polling 24 percent Republican. That's a 34 percent swing in less than two years! People with an income under \$50,000 voted 22 percent Democratic in 2008 but are now actually polling at 2 percent Republican! Just what magnitude of idiocy does it require to drive the working class and poor into voting Republican during a massive recession? And independents, who went for Democrats in 2008 by an 8 point margin are now going for Republicans by 20 points nearly a 30 percent swing in this key constituency. The repudiation of this failed presidency is now reaching epic proportions.

That's fine with me. Obama amply deserves the lashing and humiliation he's going to receive Tuesday, and then again two years later. The White House is no place for the cowardly. In normal times that would be an embarrassment. In a moment of national crisis, it's a sin. But when the republic itself is being threatened, and when the very ideas of democracy and freedom are in jeopardy, timidity is treason.

And that is precisely where we are now. People are growing desperate. Each time someone comes along and offers them some relief but doesn't deliver, they become yet more willing still to let the most outrageous actors take control of the government. Anyone who promises solutions is acceptable, including people who during normal times would have been considered darkly dangerous, just plain laughable, or both.

I'm sorry. I really don't want to ring that ubiquitous Nazism-threat bell yet again.

But wasn't that precisely how it went down in 1933?

David Michael Green is a professor of political science at Hofstra University in New York. He is delighted to receive readers' reactions to his articles (dmg@regressiveantidote.net), but regrets that time constraints do not always allow him to respond. His website is www.regressiveantidote.net.

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Saturday, October 30, 2010

Ralph Nader: Road to Corporate Serfdom

Road to Corporate Serfdom

by Ralph Nader [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 30, 2010 | Ralph Nader | CommonDreams

It was Bill Clinton's campaign strategist, James Carville, who in 1992 created the election slogan: "It's the Economy, Stupid." For the 2010 Congressional campaigns, the slogan should have been: "It's Corporate Crime and Control, Stupid."

But notwithstanding the latest corporate crime wave, the devastating fallout on workers, investors and taxpayers from the greed and corruption of Wall Street, and the abandonment of American workers by U.S. corporations in favor of repressive regimes abroad, the Democrats have failed to focus voter anger on the corporate supremacists.

The giant corporate control of our country is so vast that people who call themselves anything politically—liberal, conservative, progressive, libertarian, independents or anarchist—should be banding together against the reckless Big Business steamroller.

Conservatives need to remember the sharply critical cautions against misbehaving or over-reaching businesses and commercialism by Adam Smith, Frederic Bastiat, Friedrich Hayek and other famous conservative intellectuals. All knew that the commercial instinct and drive know few boundaries to the relentless stomping or destruction of the basic civic values for any civilized society.

When eighty percent of the Americans polled believe 'America is in decline,' they are reflecting in part the decline of real household income and the shattered bargaining power of American workers up against global companies.

The U.S. won World War II. Germany lost and was devastated. Yet note this remarkable headline in the October 27th Washington Post: "A Bargain for BMW means jobs for 1,000 in S. Carolina: Workers line up for \$15 an hour—half of what German counterparts make."

The German plant is backed by South Carolina taxpayer subsidies and is not unionized. Newly hired workers at General Motors and Chrysler, recently bailed out by taxpayers, are paid \$14 an hour before deductions. The auto companies used to be in the upper tier of high paying manufacturing jobs. Now the U.S. is a low-wage country compared to some countries in Western Europe and the trend here is continuing downward.

Workers in their fifties at the BMW plant, subsidizing their lower wages with their tax dollars, aren't openly complaining, according to the Post. Not surprising, since the alternative in a falling economy is unemployment or a fast food job at \$8 per hour.

It is not as if we weren't forewarned by our illustrious political forebears Fasten your seat belts; here are some examples:

Thomas Jefferson—"I hope that we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations, which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country."

Abraham Lincoln in 1864—"I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. ...corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed." (1864)

Theodore Roosevelt—"The citizens of the United States must control the mighty commercial forces which they themselves call into being."

Woodrow Wilson—"Big business is not dangerous because it is big, but because its bigness is an unwholesome inflation created by privileges and exemptions which it ought not to enjoy."

Franklin D. Roosevelt—"The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is Fascism—ownership of Government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power."

Dwight Eisenhower, farewell address—"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

And, lastly, a literary insight:

Theodore Dreiser—"The government has ceased to function, the corporations are the government."

Are you, dear reader, the same now as you were when you began reading this column?

[Ralph Nader](#) is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His most recent book - and first novel - is, [Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us](#). His most recent work of non-fiction is [The Seventeen Traditions](#).

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Friday, October 29, 2010

Ellen Brown: Time for a New Theory of Money

By understanding that money is simply credit, we unleash it as a powerful tool for our communities.

Time for a New Theory of Money

by Ellen Brown [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 29, 2010 | YES! Magazine | CommonDreams

The reason our financial system has routinely gotten into trouble, with periodic waves of depression like the one we're battling now, may be due to a flawed perception not just of the roles of banking and credit but of the nature of money itself. In our economic adolescence, we have regarded money as a "thing"—something independent of the relationship it facilitates. But today there is no gold or silver backing our money. Instead, [it's created by banks](#) when they make loans (that includes Federal Reserve Notes or dollar bills, which are created by the Federal Reserve, a privately-owned banking corporation, and lent into the economy). Virtually all money today originates as credit, or debt, which is simply a legal agreement to pay in the future.

Money as Relationship

In an illuminating dissertation called "[Toward a General Theory of Credit and Money](#)" in *The Review of Austrian Economics*, Mostafa Moini, Professor of Economics at Oklahoma City University, argues that money has never actually been a "commodity" or "thing." It has always been merely a "relation," a legal agreement, a credit/debit arrangement, an acknowledgment of a debt owed and a promise to repay.

The concept of money-as-a-commodity can be traced back to the use of precious metal coins. Gold is widely claimed to be the oldest and most stable currency known, but this is not actually true. Money did not begin with gold coins and evolve into a sophisticated accounting system. It began as an accounting system and evolved into the use of precious metal coins. Money as a "unit of account" (a tally of sums paid and owed) predated money as a "store of value" (a commodity or thing) by two millennia; the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations using these accounting-entry payment systems lasted not just hundreds of years (as with some civilizations using gold) but thousands of years. Their bank-like ancient payment systems were public systems—operated by the government the way that courts, libraries, and post offices are operated as public services today.

In the payment system of ancient Sumeria, goods were given a value in terms of weight and were measured in these units against each other. The unit of weight was the "shekel," something that was not originally a coin but a standardized measure. She was the word for barley, suggesting the original unit of measure was a weight of grain. This was valued against other commodities by weight: So many shekels of wheat equaled so many cows equaled so many shekels of silver, etc. Prices of major commodities were fixed by the government; Hammurabi, Babylonian king and lawmaker, has detailed tables of these. Interest was also fixed and invariable, making economic life very predictable.

Grain was stored in granaries, which served as a form of "bank." But grain was perishable, so silver eventually became the standard tally representing sums owed. A farmer could go to market and exchange his perishable goods for a weight of silver, and come back at his leisure to redeem this market credit in other goods as needed. But it was still simply a tally of a debt owed and a right to make good on it later. Eventually, silver tallies became wooden tallies became paper tallies became electronic tallies.

The Credit Revolution

The problem with gold coins was that they could not expand to meet the needs of trade. The revolutionary advance of medieval bankers was that they succeeded in creating a flexible money supply, one that could keep pace with a vigorously expanding mercantile trade. They did this through the use of credit, something they created by allowing overdrafts in the accounts of their depositors. Under what came to be called "fractional reserve" banking, the bankers would issue paper

receipts called banknotes for more gold than they actually had. Their shipping clients would sail away with their wares and return with silver or gold, settling accounts and allowing the bankers' books to balance. The credit thus created was in high demand in the rapidly expanding economy; but because it was based on the presumption that money was a "thing" (gold), the bankers had to engage in a shell game that periodically got them into trouble. They were gambling that their customers would not all come for their gold at the same time; but when they miscalculated, or when people got suspicious for some reason, there would be a run on the banks, the financial system would collapse, and the economy would sink into depression.

Today, paper money is no longer redeemable in gold, but money is still perceived as a "thing" that has to "be there" before credit can be advanced. Banks still engage in money creation by advancing bank credit, which becomes a deposit in the borrower's account, which becomes checkbook money. In order for their outgoing checks to clear, however, the banks have to borrow from a pool of money deposited by their customers. If they don't have enough deposits, they have to borrow from the money market or other banks.

As British author [Ann Pettifor](#) observes: "the banking system... has failed in its primary purpose: to act as a machine for lending into the real economy. Instead the banking system has been turned on its head, and become a borrowing machine."

The banks suck up cheap money and return it as more expensive money, if they return it at all. The banks control the money spigots and can deny credit to small players, who wind up defaulting on their loans, allowing the big players with access to cheap credit to buy up the underlying assets very cheaply.

That's one systemic flaw in the current scheme. Another is that the borrowed money backing the bank's loans usually comes from shorter-term loans. Like Jimmy Stewart's beleaguered savings and loan in *It's a Wonderful Life*, the banks are "borrowing short to lend long," and if the money market suddenly dries up, the banks will be in trouble. That is what happened in September 2008: According to Rep. Paul Kanjorski, speaking on C-Span in February 2009, there was a [\\$550 billion run](#) on the money markets.

Securitization: "Monetizing" Loans Not with Gold But with Homes

The money markets are part of the "shadow banking system," where large institutional investors park their funds. The shadow banking system allows banks to get around the capital and reserve requirements now imposed on depository institutions by moving loans off their books.

Large institutional investors use the shadow banking system because the conventional banking system guarantees deposits only up to \$250,000, and large institutional investors have much more than that to move around on a daily basis. The money market is very liquid, and what protects it in place of FDIC insurance is that it is "securitized," or backed by securities of some sort. Often, the collateral consists of mortgage-backed securities (MBS), the securitized units into which American real estate has been sliced and packaged, sausage-fashion.

Like with the gold that was lent many times over in the 17th century, the same home may be pledged as "security" for [several different investor groups](#) at the same time. This is all done behind [an electronic curtain called MERS](#) (an acronym for Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.), which has allowed houses to be shuffled around among multiple, rapidly changing owners while circumventing local recording laws.

As in the 17th century, however, the scheme has run into trouble when more than one investor group has tried to foreclose at the same time. And the securitization model has now crashed against the hard rock of hundreds of years of state real estate law, which has certain [requirements that the banks have not met](#)—and cannot meet, if they are to comply with the tax laws for mortgage-backed securities. (For more on this, [see here](#).)

The bankers have engaged in what amounts to a massive fraud, not necessarily because they started out with criminal intent (although that cannot be ruled out), but because they have been required to in order to come up with the commodities (in this case real estate) to back their loans. It is the way our system is set up: The banks are not really creating credit and advancing it to us, counting on our future productivity to pay it off, the way they once did under the deceptive but

functional façade of fractional reserve lending. Instead, they are vacuuming up our money and lending it back to us at higher rates. In the shadow banking system, they are sucking up our real estate and lending it back to our pension funds and mutual funds at compound interest. The result is a mathematically impossible pyramid scheme, which is inherently prone to systemic failure.

The Public Credit Solution

The flaws in the current scheme are now being exposed in the major media, and it may well be coming down. The question then is what to replace it with. What is the next logical phase in our economic evolution?

Credit needs to come first. We as a community can [create our own credit](#), without having to engage in the sort of impossible pyramid scheme in which we're always borrowing from Peter to pay Paul at compound interest. We can avoid the pitfalls of privately-issued credit with a public credit system, a system banking on the future productivity of its members, guaranteed not by "things" shuffled around furtively in a shell game vulnerable to exposure, but by the community itself.

The simplest public credit model is the electronic community currency system. Consider, for example, one called "[Friendly Favors](#)." The participating Internet community does not have to begin with a fund of capital or reserves, as is now required of private banking institutions. Nor do members borrow from a pool of pre-existing money on which they pay interest to the pool's owners. They create their own credit, simply by debiting their own accounts and crediting someone else's. If Jane bakes cookies for Sue, Sue credits Jane's account with 5 "favors" and debits her own with 5. They have "created" money in the same way that banks do, but the result is not inflationary. Jane's plus-5 is balanced against Sue's minus-5, and when Sue pays her debt by doing something for someone else, it all nets out. It is a zero-sum game.

[Community currency systems](#) can be very functional on a small scale, but because they do not trade in the national currency, they tend to be too limited for large-scale businesses and projects. If they were to grow substantially larger, they could run up against the sort of exchange rate problems afflicting small countries. They are basically barter systems, not really designed for advancing credit on a major scale.

The functional equivalent of a community currency system can be achieved using the national currency, by forming [a publicly owned bank](#). By turning banking into a public utility operated for the benefit of the community, the virtues of the expandable credit system of the medieval bankers can be retained, while avoiding the parasitic exploitation to which private banking schemes are prone. Profits generated by the community can be returned to the community.

A public bank that generates credit in the national currency could be established by a community or group of any size, but as long as we have capital and reserve requirements and other stringent banking laws, a state is the most feasible option. It can easily meet those requirements without jeopardizing the solvency of its collective owners.

For capital, a state bank could use some of the money stashed in a variety of public funds. This money need not be spent. It can just be [shifted from the Wall Street investments](#) where it is parked now into the state's own bank. There is precedent establishing that a state-owned bank can be both a very sound and a very lucrative investment. The [Bank of North Dakota](#), currently the nation's only state-owned bank, is rated AA and recently returned a 26 percent profit to the state. A decentralized movement has been growing in the United States to explore and implement this option. [For more information, see [public-banking.com](#).]

We have emerged from the financial crisis with new clarity: Money today is simply credit. When the credit is advanced by a bank, when the bank is owned by the community, and when the profits return to the community, the result can be a functional, efficient, and sustainable system of finance.

Ellen Brown wrote this article for [YES! Magazine](#), a national, nonprofit media organization that fuses powerful ideas with practical actions. Ellen is an attorney and the author of eleven books, including [Web of Debt: The Shocking Truth About Our Money System and How We Can Break Free](#). Her websites are [webofdebt.com](#), [ellenbrown.com](#), and [public-banking.com](#).

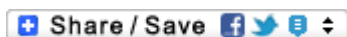
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* [New Economy, New Ways to Do Finance](#): As mega-finance crumbles, many farsighted individuals are putting their money in enterprises and financial institutions that benefit working Americans and the places they live.

* [Move Your Money and Save](#): Big banks don't just undermine local economies—they're bad for your wallet, too.

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Thursday, October 28, 2010

[Ted Rall: Bank Job: Make Rogue Corporations Pay for Foreclosure Crisis](#)

Bank Job: Make Rogue Corporations Pay for Foreclosure Crisis

by Ted Rall [article link](#)

October 28, 2010 | CommonDreams

BOSTON--"We know how to prevent foreclosures," Federal Reserve Bank senior economist Paul Willen told The New York Times. "We just need to be prepared to spend the money." Willen "sees two possible solutions: Require banks to modify loans, basically imposing the cost on them; or pay banks to modify loans, imposing the cost on taxpayers."

Millions of American families have lost their homes to foreclosure since the global economy crashed in 2008. At this writing 4.4 million more households are in severe default on their mortgages--and that doesn't count the millions of renters who are getting evicted.

A few distressed homeowners are professional "flippers" who took out short-term adjustable-rate mortgages on dozens of houses at a time. When the housing bubble burst, their dream of easy profits using borrowed cash to turn a quick profit blew up too.

But that's a rare story. The overwhelming majority are people who got into trouble through no fault of their own. Most lost their job or suffered a medical catastrophe. They're victims of the usual boom-and-bust cycle of corporate capitalism.

Laissez-faire conservatives argue that that things will sort themselves out and that society will wind up stronger as the result of "creative destruction." But the scale of the post-2008 Depression is too big to sit on our hands. One out of four Americans face current or imminent joblessness. Poverty and homelessness are about to skyrocket.

Most frightening, there is no hope of economic improvement. Obama hasn't enacted a jobs program. There's no new technology waiting in the wings to spur economic growth, as the Internet did during the 1990s. The cavalry won't be foreign investment--the rest of the world is struggling too.

The social, political--and yes, economic--consequences of creating a new vast permanent underclass are terrifying to contemplate. Theft and random violence will rise. As we're seeing with the Tea Party, right-wing demagogues will gain power. People do bad things and listen to bad people when they're afraid. The U.S. could easily end up looking like Russia.

In 2009 the Obama Administration announced a new program, Make Home Affordable, to assist distressed homeowners. But--unsurprisingly, since it was voluntary and therefore toothless--MHA has been a bust. Fewer than 500,000 households have received modifications to their mortgages. As I can personally attest, banks like Citibank, Chase and Bank of America intentionally "lost" paperwork they requested so they could evict their customers and seize their homes as quickly as possible--frequently using fraudulent documents bearing forged signatures. FDIC chairperson Sheila Bair said: "We...know that in too many instances, servicers have not made meaningful efforts to restructure loans for borrowers who have documented that they are in economic distress."

That's for sure. When I lost my half my income in 2009, Chase Home Finance advised me that getting laid off had not adversely affected my financial status.

Millions of mortgages are going to need reduced interest rates and lower principal to reflect the new reality of the housing Markey. So who's going to pay?

It would be unfair to dun the taxpayers for the cost of loan modifications. First and foremost, many people rent. Why should people who can't afford the American Dream subsidize it for others?

Besides, the taxpayers already paid. The 2008 TARP bailout should have gone to the unemployed and homeowners facing foreclosure; when they paid their mortgages this would have wiped those "toxic assets" off the banks' books. Trickle-up economics works; trickle-down doesn't.

At bare minimum, banks that can't find the note to prove they own a home in foreclosure, and those who used fraudulent "robo-signers" to sign court documents, ought to lose their mortgages outright. In a tidy bit of justice, this would be fair punishment while allowing hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of people to stay in their homes.

Next an investigation should be conducted of general bank malfeasance during the go-go '90s and '00s. Any bank that charged exorbitant interest rates on credit cards, ravaged debit card users with insane ATM fees, and failed to notify borrowers of the terms of their adjustable mortgages, should similarly face the only sanction they might remember the next time they're tempted to behave indecently: all their mortgages and credit card debt lines ought to be wiped clean.

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Ted Rall is in Afghanistan to cover the war and research a book. He is the author of "[The Anti-American Manifesto](#)," which will be published in September by Seven Stories Press. His website is tedrall.com.

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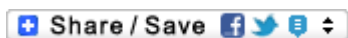
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Wednesday, October 27, 2010

Frank Chodorov: If We Quit Voting

If We Quit Voting

by Frank Chodorov [article link](#)

LewRockwell

This essay originally appeared in July 1945 in a monthly newsletter Chodorov established called analysis. It later appeared as a chapter in his book Out of Step: The Autobiography of an Individualist (1962).

New York in midsummer is measurably more miserable than any other place in this world – and should be comparable to the world for which all planners are headed. Why New Yorkers, otherwise sane, should choose to parboil their innards in a political campaign during this time of the year is a question that comes under the head of man's inscrutable propensity for self-punishment. And if a fellow elects to let the whole thing pass him by, some socially conscious energumen is bound to sweat him with a lecture on civic duty, like the citizeness who came at me.

For 25 years my dereliction has been known to my friends, and more than one has undertaken to set me straight; out of these arguments came a solid defense for my nonvoting position, so that the lady in question was well parried with practiced retorts. I pointed out, with many instances, that though we have had candidates and platforms and parties and campaigns in abundance, we have had an equivalent plenitude of poverty and crime and war. The regularity with which the perennial promise of "good times" wound up in depression suggested the incompetence of politics in economic affairs. Maybe the good society we have been voting for lay some other way; why not try another fork in the road, the one pointing to individual self-improvement, particularly in acquiring a knowledge of economics? And so on.

There was one question put to me by my charming annoyer that I deftly sidestepped, for the day was sultry and the answer called for some mental effort. The question: "What would happen if we quit voting?"

If you are curious about the result of noneating you come upon the question of why we eat. So, the query put to me by the lady brings up the reason for voting. The theory of government by elected representatives is that these fellows are hired by the voting citizenry to take care of all matters relating to their common interests. However, it is different from ordinary employment in that the representative is not under specific orders, but is given blanket authority to do what he believes desirable for the public welfare in any and all circumstances, subject to constitutional limitations. In all matters relating to public affairs the will of the individual is transferred to the elected agent, whose responsibility is commensurate with the power thus invested in him.

It is this transference of power from voter to elected agents that is the crux of republicanism. The transference is well-nigh absolute. Even the constitutional limitations are not so in fact, since they can be circumvented by legal devices in the hands of the agents. Except for the tenuous process of impeachment, the mandate is irrevocable. For the abuse or misuse of the mandate the only recourse left to the principals, the people, is to oust the agents at the next election. But when we oust the rascals, do we not, as a matter of course, invite a new crowd? It all adds up to the fact that by voting them out of power, the people put the running of their community life into the hands of a separate group, upon whose wisdom and integrity the fate of the community rests.

All this would change if we quit voting. Such abstinence would be tantamount to this notice to politicians: since we as individuals have decided to look after our affairs, your services are no longer needed. Having assumed social power we must, as individuals, assume social responsibility – provided, of course, the politicians accept their discharge. The job of running the community would fall on each and all of us. We might hire an expert to tell us about the most improved firefighting apparatus, or a manager to look after cleaning the streets, or an engineer to build us a bridge; but the final decision, particularly in the matter of raising funds to defray costs, would rest with the townhall meeting. The hired specialists would have no authority other than that necessary for the performance of their contractual duties; coercive power, which is the essence of political authority, would be exercised, if necessary, only by the committee of the whole.

There is some warrant for the belief that a better social order would ensue when the individual is responsible for it and, therefore, responsive to its needs. He no longer has the law or the lawmakers to cover his sins of omission; need of the neighbors' good opinion will be sufficient compulsion for jury duty and no loopholes in a draft law, no recourse to "political pull" will be possible when danger to his community calls him to arms. In his private affairs, the now-sovereign individual will have to meet the dictum of the marketplace: produce or you do not eat; no law will help you. In his public behavior he must be decent or suffer the sentence of social ostracism, with no recourse to legal exoneration. From a law-abiding citizen he will be transmuted into a self-respecting man.

Would chaos result? No, there would be order, without law to disturb it.

But, let us define chaos. Is it not disharmony resulting from social friction? When we trace social friction to its source do we not find that it seminate in a feeling of unwarranted hurt, or injustice? Then chaos is a social condition in which injustice obtains. Now, when one man may take, by law, what another man has put his labor into, we have injustice of the keenest kind, for the denial of a man's right to possess and enjoy what he produces is akin to a denial of life. Yet the power to confiscate property is the first business of politics. We see how this is so in the matter of taxation; but greater by far is the amount of property confiscated by monopolies, all of which are founded in law.

While this economic basis of injustice has been lost in our adjustment to it, the resulting friction is quite evident. Most of us are poor in spite of our constant effort and known ability to produce an abundance; the incongruity is aggravated by a feeling of hopelessness. But the keenest hurt arises from the thought that the wealth we see about us is somehow ours by right of labor, but is not ours by right of law. Resentment, intensified by bewilderment, stirs up a reckless urge to do something about it. We demand justice; we have friction. We have strikes and crimes and bankruptcy and mental unbalances. And we cheat our neighbors, and each seeks for himself a legal privilege to live by another's labor. And we have war. Is this a condition of harmony or of chaos?

In the frontier days of our country there was little law, but much order, for the affairs of the community were in the hands of the citizenry. Although fiction may give an opposite impression, it is a fact that there was less per capita crime to take care of then than there is now when law pervades every turn and minute of our lives. What gave the West its wild and woolly reputation was the glamorous drama of intense community life. Everybody was keenly interested in the hanging of a cattle rustler; it was not done in the calculated quiet of a prison, with the dispatch of a mechanical system. The railriding of a violator of townhall dicta had to be the business of the town prosecutor, who was everybody.

Though the citizen's private musket was seldom used for the protection of life and property, its presence promised swift and positive justice, from which no legal chicanery offered escape, and its loud report announced the dignity of decency. Every crime was committed against the public, not the law, and therefore the public made an ado about it. Mistakes were made, to be sure, for human judgment is ever fallible; but, until the politician came, there was no deliberate malfeasance or misfeasance; until laws came, there were no violations, and the code of human decency made for order.

So, if we should quit voting for parties and candidates, we would individually reassume responsibility for our acts and, therefore, responsibility for the common good. There would be no way of dodging the verdict of the marketplace; we would take back only in proportion to our contribution. Any attempt to profit at the expense of a neighbor or the community would be quickly spotted and as quickly squelched, for everybody would recognize a threat to himself in the slightest indulgence of injustice. Since nobody would have the power to enforce monopoly conditions, none would obtain. Order would be maintained by the rules of existence, the natural laws of economics.

That is, if the politicians would permit themselves to be thus ousted from their positions of power and privilege.

I doubt it.

Remember that the proposal to quit voting is basically revolutionary; it amounts to a shifting of power from one group to another, which is the essence of revolution. As soon as the nonvoting movement got up steam, the politicians would most assuredly start a counterrevolution. Measures to enforce voting would be instituted; fines would be imposed for violations, and prison sentences would be meted out to repeaters.

It is a necessity for political power, no matter how gained, to have the moral support of public approval, and suffrage is the most efficient scheme for registering it; notice how Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin insisted on having ballots cast. In any republican government, even ours, only a fraction of the populace votes for the successful candidate, but that fraction is quantitatively impressive; it is this appearance of overwhelming sanction that supports him in the exercise of political power. Without it he would be lost.

Propaganda, too, would bombard this passive resistance to statism; not only that put out by the politicians of all parties – the coalition would be as complete as it would be spontaneous – but also the more effective kind emanating from seemingly disinterested sources. All the monopolists, all the coupon-clipping foundations, all the tax-exempt eleemosynary institutions – in short, all the "respectables" – would join in a howling defense of the status quo.

We would be told most emphatically that unless we keep on voting away our power to responsible persons, it would be grabbed by irresponsible ones; tyranny would result.

That is probably true, seeing how since the beginning of time men have sought to [acquire property without laboring for it](#).

The answer lies, as it always has, in the judicious use of private artillery. On this point a story, apocryphal no doubt, is worth telling. When Napoleon's conquerors were considering what to do with him, a buck-skinned American allowed that a fellow of such parts might be handy in this new country and ought to be invited to come over. As for the possibility of a Napoleonic regime being started in America, the recent revolutionist dismissed it with the remark that the musket with which he shot rabbits could also kill tyrants. There is no substitute for human dignity.

But the argument is rather specious in the light of the fact that every election is a seizure of power. The balloting system has been defined as a battle between opposing forces, each armed with proposals for the public good, for a grant of power to put these proposals into practice. As far as it goes, this definition is correct; but when the successful contestant acquires the grant of power toward what end does he use it – not theoretically but practically? Does he not, with an eye to the next campaign, and with the citizens' money, go in for purchasing support from pressure groups? Whether it is by catering to a monopoly interest whose campaign contribution is necessary to his purpose, or to a privilege-seeking labor group, or to a hungry army of unemployed or of veterans, the over-the-barrel method of seizing and maintaining political power is standard practice.

This is not, however, an indictment of our election system. It is rather a description of our adjustment to conquest. Going back to beginnings – although the process is still in vogue, as in Manchuria, or more recently in the Baltic states – when a band of freebooters developed an appetite for other people's property they went after it with vim and vigor. Repeated visitations of this nature left the victims breathless, if not lifeless, and propertyless to boot. So, as men do when they have no other choice, they made a compromise. They hired one gang of thieves to protect them from other gangs, and in time the price paid for such protection came to be known as taxation. The tax gatherers settled down in the conquered communities, possibly to make collections certain and regular, and as the years rolled on a blend of cultures and of bloods made of the two classes one nation. But the system of taxation remained after it had lost its original significance; lawyers and professors of economics, by deft circumlocution, turned tribute into "fiscal policy" and clothed it with social good.

Nevertheless, the social effect of the system was to keep the citizenry divided into two economic groups: payers and receivers. Those who lived without producing became traditionalized as "servants of the people," and thus gained ideological support. They further entrenched themselves by acquiring sub-tax-collecting allies; that is, some of their group became landowners, whose collection of rent rested on the law-enforcement powers of the ruling clique, and others were granted subsidies, tariffs, franchises, patent rights, monopoly privileges of one sort or another. This division of spoils between those who wield power and those whose privileges depend on it is succinctly described in the expression, "the state within the state."

Thus, when we trace our political system to its origin, we come to conquest. Tradition, law, and custom have obscured its true nature, but no metamorphosis has taken place; its claws and fangs are still sharp, its appetite as voracious as ever. In the light of history it is not a figure of speech to define politics as the art of seizing power; and its present purpose, as of old, is economic.

There is no doubt that men of high purpose will always give of their talents for the common welfare, with no thought of recompense other than the goodwill of the community. But so long as our taxation system remains, so long as the political means for acquiring economic goods is available, just so long will the spirit of conquest assert itself; for men always seek to satisfy their desires with the least effort. It is interesting to speculate on the kind of campaigns and the type of candidates we would have if taxation were abolished and if, also, the power to dispense privilege vanished. Who would run for office if there were "nothing in it"?

Why should a self-respecting citizen endorse an institution grounded in thievery? For that is what one does when one votes. If it be argued that we must let bygones be bygones, see what we can do toward cleaning up the institution so that it can be used for the maintenance of an orderly existence, the answer is that it cannot be done; we have been voting for one "good government" after another, and what have we got? Perhaps the silliest argument, and yet the one invariably advanced when this succession of failures is pointed out, is that "we must choose the lesser of two evils." Under what compulsion are we to make such a choice? Why not pass up both of them?

To effectuate the suggested revolution all that is necessary is to stay away from the polls. Unlike other revolutions, it calls for no organization, no violence, no war fund, no leader to sell it out. In the quiet of his conscience each citizen pledges himself, to himself, not to give moral support to an unmoral institution, and on election day he remains at home. That's all. I started my revolution 25 years ago and the country is none the worse for it.

Reprinted from Mises.org.

Frank Chodorov (1887–1966), one of the great libertarians of the Old Right, was the founder of the [Intercollegiate Society of Individualists](#) and author of such books as [The Income Tax: Root of All Evil](#). Here he is on "[Taxation Is Robbery](#)." And [here is Rothbard's obituary of Chodorov](#).

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Coming Soon to America: Big Push for Austerity

By Roger Bybee [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Tuesday, October 26, 2010

Holly Sklar: Wall Street Has Already Voted

Wall Street Has Already Voted

by Holly Sklar [article link](#)

October 26, 2010 | CommonDreams

Before Wall Street drove our economy off a cliff, bullish Citigroup strategists dubbed the United States a "plutonomy." They said, "There are rich consumers, few in number, but disproportionate in the gigantic slice of income and consumption they take. There are the rest, the 'non-rich,' the multitudinous many, but only accounting for surprisingly small bites of the national pie."

Inequality had increased so much since the 1980s, Citi strategists noted in 2005, that the richest 1 percent of households and the bottom 60 percent had "similar slices of the income pie!" Even better, they said, "the top 1 percent of households account for 40 percent of financial net worth, more than the bottom 95 percent of households put together." And the Bush "administration's attempts to change the estate tax code and make permanent dividend tax cuts, plays directly into the hands of the plutonomy."

In "Revisiting Plutonomy: The Rich Getting Richer," Citi strategists considered the risk of backlash. "Whilst the rich are getting a greater share of the wealth ... political enfranchisement remains as was - one person, one vote," they said. "At some point it is likely that labor will fight back against the rising profit share of the rich and there will be a political backlash against the rising wealth of the rich." This could be felt, for example, "through higher taxation (on the rich or indirectly through higher corporate taxes/regulation)."

Fast forward. Wall Street wrecked the economy and was bailed out by the rest of us. "Pay on Wall Street is on pace to break a record high for a second consecutive year," the Wall Street Journal reports. Main Street, meanwhile, suffers record high foreclosures speeded by robo-signers.

Big businesses have a record amount of nearly \$2 trillion in cash and are borrowing money cheap to buy other companies, buy back stock and pay out more dividends. Small businesses can't get credit to buy more equipment or hire more workers.

According to the latest IRS data, the 400 richest taxpayers increased their average income by 399 percent, adjusted for inflation, between 1992 and 2007, and lowered their effective income tax rate by 37 percent - from 26.4 percent to 16.6 percent.

This year, the Forbes 400 richest Americans, all billionaires, enjoyed an 8 percent rise in their wealth - while more than one out of eight Americans depends on food stamps.

The backlash is here, but it's lashing in the wrong direction. The anti-government Tea Party rage plays directly into the hands of the Kings of Wall Street.

Wall Street has already voted, pouring money into Republican campaigns and anti-Democratic ads by astroturf groups that don't have to disclose their Big Bank, Big Oil, Big Business donors. "Our target ratio for the 2010 cycle is 80-20 Republican," American Financial Services Association representative Karen Klugh told Politico.

Wall Street expects a good return on their investment. "Wall Street is preparing for a Republican surge in Congress that could help it block proposed taxes on banks and investments, blunt new financial regulations and regain some of the lobbying firepower it lost during the financial crisis," Bloomberg reports. "Banks would prefer to have Republicans overseeing the regulators, lobbyists said."

Wall Street wants freedom to gamble with our money - including the Social Security funds Republicans want to try again to privatize.

"The Republican agenda could also give new life to free-trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea," Bloomberg reports. That's good news for the plutocrats. As Citigroup said in 2005, "Globalization is making it easier for companies to either outsource manufacturing (source from cheap emerging markets like China and India) or 'offshore' manufacturing (move production to lower cost countries)."

Average wages are 7 percent lower today, adjusted for inflation, than they were back in 1973. Do you want to go lower?

The richest 1 percent has more wealth than the bottom 95 percent combined, but just 1 percent of the vote.

Wall Street plundered your livelihoods, homes and retirement funds - and now they want you to bail them out, again, with your vote.

They want to sell you bait-and-switch candidates like they sold you bait-and-switch mortgages. And laugh all the way to the bank.

Wall Street has voted. It's your turn.

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Holly Sklar is author of "A Just Minimum Wage: Good for Workers, Business and Our Future" (www.letjusticeroll.org) and "Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All of Us." She can be reached at [hsklar.writer\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:hsklar.writer@gmail.com).

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The Tea Party Movement: Deluded and Inspired by Billionaires

By funding numerous rightwing organisations, the mega-rich Koch brothers have duped millions into supporting big business

by George Monbiot [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

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Shamus Cooke: French Lessons for U.S. Workers

French Lessons for U.S. Workers

by Shamus Cooke [article link](#)

October 26, 2010 | CommonDreams

The world watches as France once again erupts in protests, demonstrations, and strikes. So much is at stake. If France's corporate-dominated government is able to increase the retirement age, other governments will be empowered to follow through with their plans to do the same.

If labor, student, and community groups succeed in stopping the pension reform -- or toppling the government -- workers in other countries will likewise be inspired to fight back and organize in the French fashion.

The worldwide recession has encouraged business-focused governments to pursue the kind of anti-worker policies they've been discussing for years. There is common agreement among these governments on a global scale as to the necessity for these policies. Working people disagree.

There have already been massive demonstrations or general strikes in Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and elsewhere. In England, massive cuts to the public sector -- 500,000 job cuts -- have been announced that could cause a similar backlash.

In the United States, President Obama has formed his Deficit Reduction Commission, which has in its sights Social Security and Medicare. The Los Angeles Times [reports](#):

"Social Security is one of several areas being eyed by the panel [deficit reduction commission] for changes...other commission targets include Medicare, defense spending and a range of tax policies..." (September 29, 2010).

Obama's commission will report its "findings" sometime after the November elections, possibly as early as December 1st.

In this way, the public will have no immediate recourse to punish the House and Senate members involved in these closed-door sessions, which will open the door to massive spending cuts in social programs.

This backroom, undemocratic scheming is happening all over Europe, with incredible implications: enormous changes are happening to nations with zero input from the population; no voting is taking place over these policies, they are simply being pushed through.

But France is changing everything. French workers stopped a conservative government in 1995 from implementing a similar reform -- they are confident that they can stop this one too.

The French working class is busting a myth broadcasted from governments everywhere, that massive spending cuts are "necessary" and worse, "inevitable," no matter how unpopular (undemocratic). In France, 71 percent of the population supports the unions' opposition to raising the retirement age. And given that the inequalities in wealth have been growing for the past several decades throughout Europe and the U.S., an obvious alternative to lowering the budget deficit would be to tax the rich.

If the French workers can force "their" President and "their" Congress to back down, resign, or change nationalities, working people all over the world will be inspired to do likewise, even in the United States.

The French government has not yet backed down as workers have shut down oil refineries, railways, and government services on a broad scale. High school and university students are shutting down their schools; massive demonstrations have been held as public support for the strikes remains high, as does hate for the government.

Instead of defusing the movement, the French government's obstinacy has only radicalized it. Workers across France are calling for an indefinite general strike -- paralyzing the country -- until the government backs down, or crumbles.

If this happens, the powerlessness that workers feel in the United States and England will melt away: seeing their potential power realized in another country inevitably inspires confidence. This is one reason why the U.S. mainstream media wants the French government to push through the unpopular measures.

Labor unions in the United States need to educate their members and the community at large about the intentions of Obama's Deficit Reduction Commission as well as the Democrats in general. The same unions that are the backbone of the French movement are also very powerful in the United States: public sector workers, teachers, bus and truck drivers, dockworkers, railway workers, etc.

A solution to the U.S. deficit problem also needs to be proposed by these unions, who, like those in France, must unite in coalitions to demand that taxes be raised on the wealthy and corporations, instead of cuts in social services, pensions, and education.

After the elections the Democrats are planning to bare their teeth; working people should be sharpening their claws in preparation.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for [Workers Action](#). He can be reached at shamuscook@gmail.com

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Monday, October 25, 2010

[Adele M. Stan: Tea Party Inc.](#)

Tea Party Inc.: The Big Money and Powerful Elites Behind the Right Wing's Latest Uprising

By Adele M. Stan [article link](#)

October 24, 2010 | AlterNet | The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute

This article was reported in collaboration with The Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.

Win or lose, the Tea Party movement will come away from next week's elections triumphant, having injected into the Republican Party a group of candidates pledged to the dismantling of government and wed to the religious right. Of the movement's dozen favored candidates for U.S. Senate, all are anti-abortion, and five oppose it even in cases of rape and incest. Among their number are Colorado's Ken Buck, who has compared homosexuality to alcoholism, and Nevada's Sharron Angle, who wants to demolish both the Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency. Major GOP players, from political strategist Karl Rove to former Bush speechwriter David Frum, have fretted publicly over Tea Party extremism, with Frum complaining of the movement's "paranoid delusions."

But it has now become clear that these Tea Party "outsiders" are all part of an inside game, a battle for control of the Republican party.

Though billed as a people's movement, the Tea Party wouldn't exist without a gusher of cash from oil billionaire David H. Koch and the vast media empire of Rupert Murdoch. Many of the small donations to Tea Party candidates have been cultivated by either Fox News Channel, a property of Murdoch's News Corporation, or the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, chaired by Koch. The movement's major organizations are all run, not by first-time, mad-as-hell activists, but by former GOP officials or operatives.

Taken together, Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks (another far-right political group seeded by the Kochs) and Murdoch's News Corp, owner of Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal*, form the corporate headquarters of a conglomerate one might call Tea Party, Inc. This is the syndicate that funds the organizing, crafts the messages, and channels the rage of conservative Americans at their falling fortunes into an oppositional force to President Obama and to any government solution to the current economic calamity. Groups such as Tea Party Express, Tea Party Nation, and the FreedomWorks-affiliated Tea Party Patriots; the bevy of political consultants for hire; and various allied elected officials can be understood as Tea Party, Inc.'s loosely affiliated subsidiaries. The Web sites of FreedomWorks, Americans for Prosperity and the Tea Party side projects of Fox News Channel's Glenn Beck are linked with those of Tea Party Express and Tea Party Patriots, all of which in turn solicit support for Tea Party candidates.

The armies of angry white people with their "Don't Tread on Me" flags, the actual grassroots activists, are not the agents of the Tea Party revolt, but its end users, enriching the Tea Party's corporate owners just as you and I enrich Google through our clicks.

Coming Out Party

Tea Party, Inc. was on full display in our nation's capital in late August, when Glenn Beck gathered his angry white multitudes at the Lincoln Memorial on the anniversary of Martin Luther King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech. The tens of thousands of Tea Partiers who showed up for this political revival were mobilized by untold hours of free promotion on Murdoch's network, while a related "Take America Back" convention, held the day before at Constitution Hall, was convened by FreedomWorks.

At that event, the crowd was treated to a trailer for a forthcoming film called *Runaway Slave*, narrated by Rev. C.L. Bryant, an African-American pastor from Louisiana identified as "a former NAACP radical," who made the case that liberalism is yet another means of enslaving black people.

"[I]n the black community," Bryant says in the film, "there's always somebody who's gotta keep them niggers in control." A photo of Jesse Jackson flashed on the screen. Then one of Al Sharpton. Some images flashed by so quickly that they were barely discernable. One was of a wriggling maggot.

Before the night was out, Glenn Beck himself graced the stage, asking the crowd to "expect miracles" at the next day's rally.

A few miles away, a more sedate crowd was jammed into a Marriott ballroom for a gala dinner that wrapped up yet another activist conference, the Defending the American Dream Summit, this one convened by the Americans for Prosperity Foundation. Striding toward the podium to the opening strains of "New York, New York" was chairman Koch. Tall and dapper in a precisely tailored dark suit, the 70-year-old stood in sharp contrast to the 2,500 middle-class women in pastel frocks and men in department-store sport coats who populated the ballroom tables.

Koch prefers to be known for the hundreds of millions he lavishes on his adopted city's cultural institutions -- the New York City Ballet, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Opera, to name a few. But the quieter largess behind events like these, dispensed by David Koch and his brother Charles, has reshaped Washington, D.C., and our national politics. Though Americans for Prosperity, which he founded, and its foundation, whose board he chairs, have been instrumental in organizing the Tea Party movement, Koch still publicly claims to have no Tea Party ties, making tonight's appearance notable.

"Six years ago, when we launched this organization," he said in his uneasy and halting style, "we envisioned a grassroots organization of Americans from all walks of life banded together to advance economic freedom and prosperity by limiting government's reach, and curbing government's growth, reining in government spending. ... We envisioned an organization that would boldly and unapologetically defend the free-market economy. The Tea Party is Koch's dream come true; the Washington summit, he told attendees, was designed to train grassroots activists in the defense of the "free-market economy" and "to send a message to the political class that these activists [are] energized and watching" its members.

The Capitol Hill Franchise

The self-appointed head of Tea Party, Inc.'s Capitol Hill division is the junior senator from South Carolina, Jim DeMint. DeMint is the top Senate recipient of donations from the Koch Industries' PAC, reeling in \$22,000 in the current election cycle for a race he stands virtually no chance of losing. The Kochs' PAC is also the number three donor to DeMint's PAC, the Senate Conservatives Fund, which he spends on other races.

In DeMint, the Kochs found a politician who will make no compromises on their far-right agenda, favoring tax cuts and opposing health-care reform, green energy, labor unions and regulation of any kind. Last year, DeMint received the Americans for Prosperity Foundation's George Washington Award, bestowed upon the senator by Koch himself. Speaking at the organization's summit in August, Koch said DeMint "has consistently stood for freedom against this big-government agenda." In backing DeMint's power play against leaders of the Republican establishment, particularly his challenge to the power of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, the Kochs stand poised to push those establishment leaders into the same uncompromising positions.

Echoing DeMint's agenda are Rep. Michele Bachmann, a Minnesota Republican who, in July, founded a Tea Party Caucus in the House of Representatives, and Rep. Mike Pence, a Republican from Indiana, who is House GOP conference chairman and a charter member of the new caucus. Both are Tea Party favorites, and Bachmann is a regular speaker at Americans for Prosperity events. At the Americans for Prosperity Foundation's RightOnline conference, held in Las Vegas in July, Pence used a luncheon address to make the case for melding the free-market Tea Party agenda with the values of the religious right, while Bachmann entertained a banquet crowd with her plan to phase out Social Security.

FreedomWorks has its eye on a political transformation in the Senate, and is closely allied with DeMint, whose PAC is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on behalf of many of the same Tea Party-backed Senate candidates endorsed by the FreedomWorks PAC, including Sharron Angle (currently in a tight race against Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid), Rand Paul in Kentucky, Marco Rubio in Florida, and Utah's Mike Lee. (Bachmann's Tea Party Caucus was announced the

day after Paul, addressing FreedomWorks activists on a July 13 conference call, suggested a Tea Party caucus for the Senate.) Each of these candidacies began as primary challenges to establishment Republicans endorsed by McConnell.

In September, Huffington Post political columnist Sam Stein cited a Democratic strategist who said that by the midterms' close, Americans for Prosperity will have spent \$45 million on organizing "voter education" and get-out-the-vote activities that test the limits of legal nonprofit expenditures. Actually, Americans for Prosperity president Tim Phillips told me his plan was to raise and spend even more, though he wouldn't name a figure. Even the lesser amount, according to tax filings, would represent a tripling of its funds since 2008.

FreedomWorks also hopes to triple its revenue, from \$3 million in 2008, according to tax filings, to an anticipated \$10 million this election cycle, according to Adam Brandon, the group's communications director. In a fundraising video sent by FreedomWorks to new members, leaders announce that every dollar raised will be matched by an unnamed donor. Both Brandon and Koch Industries spokesperson [Melissa Cohlman](#) say that FreedomWorks has received no funding from the Kochs or their foundations since 2004, so there is likely another high-roller involved. But neither FreedomWorks nor Americans for Prosperity, nor its foundation, is required by law to disclose its donors and -- like advocacy organizations across the political spectrum -- they don't.

At any rate, the vast expenditures on organizing have worked in at least one way: FreedomWorks' membership had reached nearly 1.1 million by mid-October, according to the group's Web site ticker. Americans for Prosperity claims 1.5 million members and chapters in 31 states.

Both groups excel at training activists and spreading the word for Tea Party candidates, who have raked in a significant portion of their campaign donations from small donors, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. When Angle's campaign announced earlier this month that it had raised a whopping \$14 million since June, spokesperson Jarrod Agen told the *Washington Post* that 96 percent of those donations were \$200 or less. (At press time, neither Angle nor the FEC had released official filings.)

One "voter education" exercise I witnessed was the dispatch of participants in July's RightOnline conference to canvass the Las Vegas suburbs, armed with a script about Harry Reid. "Reid voted for the failed \$800 billion stimulus plan that has wasted our tax dollars on more government," it read. "Reid's policies will make government bigger, waste more money, drive up budget deficits and kill jobs."

The canvassers had just heard Angle, Reid's opponent, deliver the conference's closing speech. But as they boarded vans for their deployments, they were reminded this was, of course, a nonpartisan exercise — since the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, a nonprofit, is forbidden from endorsing candidates.

The Money Men

The Tea Party's two major patrons are fabulously wealthy. David Koch is heir to the fortunes of Koch Industries, described in 2008 by *Fortune* as the largest privately held corporation in the United States, and was ranked by *Forbes* as one of the world's richest people, with an estimated personal wealth of \$17.5 billion. Rupert Murdoch, founder and CEO of News Corp -- ranked by *Fortune* as world's second-largest entertainment company -- was also rated by *Forbes* among the world's wealthiest, with personal wealth of \$6.3 billion.

Koch Industries, with David as executive vice-president and his brother Charles as CEO, presides over a vast conglomerate of oil and gas interests, as well as holdings in timber and chemicals. Since the 1970s, the two men have funded and controlled a large network of right-wing institutions, launching the libertarian Cato Institute in 1977 and the Mercatus Institute in 1985, all of which advocate business deregulation under the rubric of "free markets."

Both cornerstones of Tea Party Inc. -- FreedomWorks and the two entities comprising Americans for Prosperity -- sprang from Koch's riches. FreedomWorks rose from the ashes of Citizens for a Sound Economy, an early Astroturf group and think tank he founded during the Reagan years to advocate for lower taxes, less regulation, and smaller government. CSE

was rebranded as FreedomWorks in 2004, after a corporate-style merger with Empower America, founded by the late Republican Congressman Jack Kemp to limit government and privatize government services.

That same year, Koch rebranded CSE's foundation as the Americans for Prosperity Foundation and founded its sibling organization, Americans for Prosperity.^[i] Koch hired the politically connected Tim Phillips to serve as president of both organizations. (Phillips is a business partner of former Christian Coalition director Ralph Reed in a political consulting firm, Century Strategies, which was implicated, but never charged, in the bribery scandal that sent Jack Abramoff to prison.)

Koch and his allies built the underpinnings for a movement not quite ready to be born. The absent ingredient was rage. But by 2009, with the collapse of the economy and the election of the nation's first African-American president, the supply chain of rage was complete, and the Tea Party came roaring to life. Rupert Murdoch gave the new movement legitimacy by means of sympathetic columns in the *Wall Street Journal*, boosterism from Sean Hannity and Glenn Beck and a regular media platform on Fox News Channel for Tea Party personalities and candidates. As Jane Mayer remarked in her *New Yorker* profile of the Kochs, the Tea Party had at last turned their private agenda into a mass movement.

The role of these groups in launching the movement is indisputable. In concert with Glenn Beck's 912 Project, FreedomWorks did the logistical organizing for the first Tea Party march on Washington, in September 2009. Beck launched the 912 Project on his Fox News Channel show, promoted the march on his show and mobilized for it through a social networking Web site built by his production company.

Since then, the groups have been tearing through the Murdoch-Koch agenda. Americans for Prosperity says it convened, through an offshoot, some 300 rallies against health-care reform, and once the healthcare bill was passed in March, the organization quickly moved to block cap-and-trade as a means of regulating carbon emissions. In fact, at an Americans for Prosperity Foundation conference I attended in Pittsburgh in August 2009, cap-and-trade was already being introduced as the next Tea Party battle. This is a longstanding priority for Koch Industries, a major polluter heavily invested in old energy technologies. In a March 2010 report, Greenpeace said that, over the years, the Koch brothers have "quietly funneled" nearly \$50 million to "climate-denial front groups that are working to delay policies and regulations aimed at stopping global warming."

Wall Street Journal columnist Stephen Moore -- a member of the newspaper's editorial board and a former fellow at the Koch-funded Cato Institute -- told the gathering of Tea Party activists he thought global warming was "the greatest hoax of the last 100 years." He called the climate change agenda "not just evil, but...contrary to the free-market system that made this country great."

The Media Storm

It is not unusual for op-ed pages to reflect the bias of an outlet's owners. It is highly unusual, however, for news operations to engage in outright political organizing on behalf of a CEO's agenda. Yet that's just what certain Fox News hosts and *Wall Street Journal* columnists seem to be doing on behalf of Rupert Murdoch, who is opposed to regulation of any kind, hates taxes, and despises labor unions -- having famously broken unions at his UK newspapers.

News Corp's best-known personalities accomplish this by working hand in glove with the like-minded ideologues at Americans for Prosperity. Fox News hosts, along with Stephen Moore and fellow *Wall Street Journal* columnist John Fund, are regular speakers at conferences sponsored by the Americans for Prosperity Foundation. At the group's 2009 RightOnline conference, a third of the plenary speakers were News Corp writers and pundits, including Moore and Fund, as well as Jim Pinkerton and Michelle Malkin, who were paid Fox commentators at the time. Fox News personality John Stossel spoke against health-care reform at three rallies sponsored by Americans for Prosperity, while Sean Hannity, host of a prime-time Fox News show, live-broadcast Americans for Prosperity's 2009 Tax Day protest in Atlanta -- and the network preempted regular programming to present it. Moore and Fund also shill for the foundation's anti-regulatory "worker education" project, known as Prosperity101.

The door swings the other way as well. By means of his regular presence on Fox's airwaves and [column](#) at the FoxNation Web site, Americans for Prosperity vice president Phil Kerpen was instrumental in building the case against Obama green jobs adviser Van Jones, who was ultimately forced to resign his White House post.

At last year's RightOnline conference, I asked Americans for Prosperity president Tim Phillips if his group worked in partnership with News Corp, given the presence of so many of its personalities on the roster.

"Not at all, not at all," he replied with a laugh. "The fact is, the *Wall Street Journal's* my favorite newspaper; I love those guys. I like what they write. I look at Steve Moore and John Fund, and those are two of the smartest guys. But there's no partnership -- financially, understood, or anything else."

News Corp enjoys a similarly friendly -- if similarly informal -- relationship with FreedomWorks. In early October, FreedomWorks was promoting its Take America Back campaign -- a get-out-the-vote effort -- with a photo of Glenn Beck standing before his iconic blackboard. The FreedomWorks' Web site also featured an audio message from Beck: "I've been sayin' it for weeks. If you care about freedom, you must get involved. If you really want to end tyranny in Washington, you must get involved. And the group you need to find out about is FreedomWorks. ... Take America back -- FreedomWorks.org." Just days ago, Beck's image was used in a splash screen to solicit contributions for FreedomWorks' PAC.

To Rupert Murdoch, Glenn Beck is much more than a broadcaster; he's Murdoch's lead community organizer. His show has leached revenue since the civil rights group Color of Change launched a boycott of his advertisers, reportedly chasing away at least 100. But his act is far more profitable to News Corp in another way -- by creating the conditions for a stripping away of federal regulations that limit the growth of News Corp and its bottom line. And so Beck's rants become more shrill and his claims more preposterous, whether he is stoking racial fears or recalling that old bogeyman threat of looming socialism -- a theme straight out of the John Birch Society, of which the Kochs' father, Fred, was a founding member.

The Campaigns

In Washington, D.C., Adam Brandon, FreedomWorks' communications director, is bubbling over with excitement at the end of a long, hot July day. "I'm racking up the frequent flyer miles," he says of his relentless weekend trips to train Tea Party activists in how to chalk up wins for candidates FreedomWorks' PAC has endorsed.

FreedomWorks doesn't aim to elect just any Tea Party candidate to office: as with DeMint's Senate Conservatives Fund, its endorsements seem designed to undermine the current GOP establishment, push the party rightward and further an anti-regulatory agenda. Well before others joined in, FreedomWorks embraced far-right insurgencies, notably those of Marco Rubio and Rand Paul. Both endorsements put FreedomWorks at loggerheads with Sen. McConnell, whose candidates -- including his hand-picked protégé in his home state of Kentucky -- were vanquished.

DeMint's PAC spends hefty amounts on behalf of its endorsed candidates, including \$447,000 for Rubio and \$95,000 for Paul (\$95,000). FreedomWorks matches DeMint's cash with ground forces. The PAC runs an online "service center," where, according to FreedomWorks president Matt Kibbe, Tea Partiers "get the tools they need to turn a protest into a sophisticated, turn-out-the-vote effort." Those tools include walking maps, door-hangers, talking points, and "a sophisticated phone-banking system that is going to allow you to make calls in all of our targeted races." If you're an activist in Wisconsin, FreedomWorks can set you up to turn out voters for Rand Paul in Kentucky. Combined, these Tea Party outfits have proven that they have the potential to decide elections.

When I asked whether FreedomWorks' endorsements were chosen in part to undermine McConnell, Brandon declined to answer directly, but his response revealed the intimate ties between his outfit and DeMint's. DeMint has been stalwart on behalf of FreedomWorks' positions, Brandon explained. These include opposition to healthcare and energy reform and labor unions. But DeMint needs more people like him in the Senate in order to create something of a caucus -- "a new power center," Brandon called it.

Their combined might was recently on display in Utah, where DeMint and FreedomWorks joined forces to replace incumbent Republican Senator Bob Bennett. DeMint's PAC and FreedomWorks' PAC each rank among the top twelve donors to Bennett's challenger, Tea Partier Mike Lee.

In Utah, candidates must win delegates at their state party convention; primaries take place only if a run-off is needed. So FreedomWorks helped pack the convention with Tea Party-allied delegates, and Lee showed convention-goers a video endorsement by DeMint. Bennett lost his seat that day, coming in third with 26 percent of the vote. (The remainder was split between Lee and another Tea Party candidate.) Lee prevailed in the subsequent two-way primary, with more help from DeMint's PAC, which has spent \$315,000 on his behalf, including \$184,000 in so-called "independent expenditures," according to FEC filings.

Suppliers and Subsidiaries

While Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks and News Corp run the boardroom of Tea Party, Inc., a growing number of national organizations have sprung up to provide a range of services; call them the suppliers. Some have similar names -- Tea Party Patriots, Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Express -- though they compete ferociously. Reed's Faith & Freedom Coalition provides a unique service to Tea Party Inc.: the promise of delivering religious-right voters to its candidates. Like the big players, these groups, too, are run by former Republican officials or political consultants.

Tea Party Patriots, perhaps the most substantial of these groups, was born of FreedomWorks, as co-founder Jenny Beth Martin points out in a FreedomWorks video, and its state chapters do the on-the-ground organizing for FreedomWorks' agenda. Martin, a former Republican political consultant in Georgia, coordinates the group with Mark Meckler, a Northern California attorney who previously ran an online political consultancy with GOP ties.

More flamboyant is Tea Party Express, another name for Our Country Deserves Better, an anti-Obama PAC founded by Howard Kaloogian, the California attorney who orchestrated the recall of Gov. Gray Davis. The group has already weathered controversy -- its spokesperson, radio talk-show host Mark Williams, was forced to exit the organization in July after authoring a demeaning satire of NAACP president Ben Jealous. But Tea Party Express has nevertheless raised \$6.6 million this election, according to recent FEC data, making it, in the estimation of the New York Times, "the single biggest independent supporter of Tea Party candidates." And the group has racked up primary victories for Tea Party insurgents such as Christine O'Donnell in Delaware, who benefitted from \$250,000 in Tea Party Express ad buys; Joe Miller in Alaska, who beat incumbent Lisa Murkowski with the aid of \$550,000 from the group; and Angle, who has enjoyed nearly \$1 million in "independent expenditure" advertising by the group, according to FEC filings.

"Sharron Angle, in my opinion, wouldn't have won [the Republican primary] without the Tea Party Express," California Republican consultant and Tea Party organizer Eric Odom told participants in this year's RightOnline conference.

Reed's Faith & Freedom Coalition, which seeks to unite the Tea Party and the religious right, provides a unique service to Tea Party Inc.: delivery of religious-right voters to its candidates. On September 11, Reed brought together a few hundred activists for a strategy briefing at Washington, D.C.'s Mayflower Hotel. The event featured speakers from the GOP's glory days, from Karl Rove to Newt Gingrich. There Reed instructed activists on how to "move the needle" when the polls are against you.

"We're building databases of faith-based and fiscal conservatives in every key congressional race, U.S. Senate race or governor's race, and a lot of targeted state legislative races," Reed explained. "Those voters are going to be contacted an average of seven times. We're gonna mail 'em, we're gonna phone 'em, if we have an e-mail, we're gonna e-mail 'em, if we have a cell phone number, we're gonna text-message them. And at the end, we're gonna knock on their door."

Reed's big announcement of his new Faith & Freedom Coalition took place in August 2009, at an Atlanta rally against health-care reform convened by Americans for Prosperity, the organization fronted by his old business partner, Tim Phillips. FreedomWorks chairman Dick Armey delivered the keynote address, and Fox News contributor Herman Cain made the business case against health-care reform.

Phillips couldn't make it to Atlanta that day. He was stuck in Pittsburgh, at his RightOnline conference, rubbing elbows with the stars of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

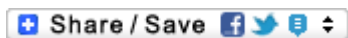
Adele M. Stan is AlterNet's Washington bureau chief.

Click [here](#) for an Illustrated Guide to Tea Party, Inc.

For more of AlterNet's reporting on the Tea Party movement, check out our new anthology, [Dangerous Brew: Exposing the Tea Party's Agenda to Take Over America](#), edited by Don Hazen and Adele M. Stan.

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Monday, October 25, 2010

Rebecca Solnit: Jurassic Ballot: When Corporations Ruled the Earth

Jurassic Ballot: When Corporations Ruled the Earth

by Rebecca Solnit [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 25, 2010 | TomDispatch | CommonDreams | AlterNet

This country is being run for the benefit of alien life forms. They've invaded; they've infiltrated; they've conquered; and a lot of the most powerful people on Earth do their bidding, including five out of our nine Supreme Court justices earlier this year and a whole lot of senators and other elected officials all the time. The monsters they serve demand that we ravage the planet and impoverish most human beings so that they might thrive. They're like the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park, like the Terminators, like the pods in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, except that those were on the screen and these are in our actual world.

We call these monsters corporations, from the word corporate which means embodied. A corporation is a bunch of monetary interests bound together into a legal body that was once considered temporary and dependent on local licensing, but now may operate anywhere and everywhere on Earth, almost unchallenged, and live far longer than you.

The results are near-invincible bodies, the most gigantic of which are oil companies, larger than blue whales, larger than dinosaurs, larger than Godzilla. Last year, Shell, BP, and Exxon were [three of the top four](#) mega-corporations by sales on the Fortune Global 500 list (and Chevron came in eighth). Some of the oil companies are well over a century old, having morphed and split and merged while continuing to pump filth into the air, the water, and the bodies of the many -- and profits into the pockets of the few.

Thanks to a Supreme Court [decision](#) this January, they have the same rights as you when it comes to putting money into the political process, only they're millions of times larger than you -- and they're pumping millions of dollars into races nationwide. It's like inviting a T. rex into your checkers championship -- and it doesn't matter whether dinosaurs can play checkers, at least not once you're being pulverized by their pointy teeth.

The amazing thing is that they don't always win, that sometimes thousands of puny mammals -- that's us -- do overwhelm one of them.

Gigantic, powerful, undead beings, corporations have been given ever more human rights over the past 125 years; they act on their own behalf, not mine or yours or humanity's or, really, carbon-based life on Earth's. We're made out of carbon, of course, but we depend on a planet where much of the carbon is locked up in the earth. The profit margins of the oil corporations depend on putting as much as possible of that carbon into the atmosphere.

So in a lot of basic ways, we are at odds with these creations. The novelist John le Carré [remarked](#) earlier this month, "The things that are done in the name of the shareholder are, to me, as terrifying as the things that are done -- dare I say it -- in the name of God." Corporations have their jihads and crusades too, since they subscribe to a religion of maximum profit for themselves, and they'll kill to achieve it. In an odd way, shareholders and god have merged in the weird new religion of unfettered capitalism, the one in which regulation is blasphemy and profit is sacred. Thus, the economic *jihads* of our age.

They Fund By Night!

In the *jihad* that concerns me right now, most of the monsters come from Texas; the prey is in California; and it's called our economy and our environment. Four years ago, with state Assembly Bill 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, we Californians decided we'd like to cultivate our environment for the benefit of all of us, human and biological, now and in the long future.

They'd like to pillage it to keep their profit margins in tip-top shape this year and next. The latest tool to do this is called Proposition 23, and it's on our ballot on November 2nd. It is wholly destructive, cloaked in lies, and benefits no one -- no one human, that is, though it benefits the oil corporations a lot. (You could argue that it benefits their shareholders, but I'd suggest that their biological and moral nature matters more than their bank accounts do and that, as a consequence, they're acting against their deepest interests and their humanity.)

When he signed AB 32 into law, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who's totally weird, termed out, but really good on climate stuff, [said](#): "Some have challenged whether AB 32 is good for businesses. I say unquestionably it is good for businesses. Not only large, well-established businesses, but small businesses that will harness their entrepreneurial spirit to help us achieve our climate goals. Using market-based incentives, we will reduce carbon emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2020. That's a 25% reduction. And by 2050, we will reduce emissions to 80% below 1990 levels. We simply must do everything in our power to slow down global warming before it's too late."

With Proposition 23, two out-of-state oil corporations, Valero and Tesoro, and right-wing oil billionaires based in New York and Kansas are trying to use the California initiative process, originally intended to allow citizen intervention in the governance of this state, to countermand AB 32 and set policy for us. "According to data from the California Secretary of State's office," Kate Sheppard [recently reported](#) in *Mother Jones* magazine, "more than 98% of contributions to the pro-Prop. 23 campaign are from oil companies. Eighty-nine percent of the contributions come from out of state... Valero contributed \$4 million, Tesoro gave \$1.5 million, and a refinery owned by the notorious Kansas-based billionaire brothers [David and Charles Koch](#), of Koch Industries, kicked in another \$1 million. Just last week, Houston-based Marathon oil contributed \$500,000."

Actually, Tesoro and Valero are headquartered out of state, but their refineries in California [gave us](#) 2.4 million pounds of toxic chemicals in our air and water last year, and they'd like to continue offering the citizens of my state these gifts that keep giving illness, death, and long-term environmental devastation without interference. The coming vote is not about protecting fancy places for upscale hikers -- the stereotype used to portray environmentalism as a white-person's luxury movement -- it's about air quality for inner-city people, especially those who live near refineries and harbors. This is the

kind of environmental degradation that's about childhood asthma and increased deaths from respiratory illness. In other words, Prop. 23 is part of a corporate war on the poor. A vote for Prop. 23 is a vote to turn the lungs of poor children into a snack for dinosaurs, to put it in bluntly Hollywood-ish terms.

Lies of the Living Dead

To sabotage AB 32, they're spending lots and lots of money and telling lots and lots of lies. Start with the proposition's name -- "The California Jobs Initiative" -- designed to make you think that this measure will create jobs. Actually, according to most reputable analyses, it will do the opposite. A green economy has made jobs, is making jobs, and will make more jobs. This stealth initiative would suspend AB 32 until unemployment in California drops below 5.5% for four consecutive quarters, which it won't anytime soon, if ever.

The implication is that doing something about climate change is a luxury we cannot afford in this bleak economy. That's a lie. Down the road, if we don't retool to address a future in which there's less petroleum (at far higher prices), we'll truly crash and the suffering will be intense. AB 32 would prevent that crash; Prop. 23 steers us directly into it.

The more we heat up the planet, the more it costs all of us, not just in money, but in colossal famines, displacements, deaths, and species extinctions, as well as in the loss of some of the things that make this planet a blue-green jewel, including its specialized habitats from the melting Arctic to [bleaching coral reefs](#).

Doing something about climate change makes economic sense *right now*. It's good business.

It's hardly surprising that the corporate aliens lie when it comes to the relationship between doing something about climate change and the economy. After all, oil corporations funded a lot of the disinformation campaigns which, for years, promoted the idea that human-caused climate change was a figment of the overheated imaginations of mad environmentalists, and later that there was controversy (as well as corruption) among scientists when it came to global warming. The only honest information would have been that about 97% of the world's relevant scientists overwhelmingly agree that climate change couldn't be more real and is a genuine danger to humanity and the planet -- and that the evidence is [all around](#) us in freakish weather, rising oceans, melting arctic ice and glaciers, shifting habitats, and more.

The Phantom of Democracy

The oil dinosaurs want to win so badly in my home state because what happens here matters everywhere. The nation often follows where California goes. In the 1970s, we started setting energy efficiency standards that mean we Californians now use about half the energy of the average American (with no diminishment of quality of life or pocketbook pain). In the last decade, we created cutting edge measures to curb carbon emissions.

In 2002, Los Angeles state assemblywoman Fran Pavley (now a state senator) put out AB 1493, which was to -- and will -- reduce vehicle greenhouse gas emissions. It was, unfortunately, held up for six years by the Bush administration and then [transformed](#) into a national standard by Barack Obama as one of his first acts in office. Pavley also authored the now embattled "Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006," AB 32.

If you think oil corporations and life share an interest, you should've been in the Gulf of Mexico a few months ago. [I was](#). I saw their oiled pelicans, their unemployed fishermen, and their oil-smeared marshes. I tasted and smelled the poisons I could not see, and I read their lies.

The people of the Gulf will struggle to survive the recklessness of BP for decades to come, but the petrobeasts aren't just destructive when things go wrong; they're that way when things go according to plan as well. If the 5.5 million barrels of oil that spilled into the Gulf, thanks to BP, had instead made it to our gas tanks, the consequences would still have been dire. They are dire. The companies funding Prop. 23 are themselves a major source of climate change and, of course, a major obstacle to coming up with solutions to it.

Like the people of the Gulf during the spill, the people of Richmond, California, in the San Francisco Bay area, live with those tastes, smells, and consequences all the time, because they're in the shadow of Chevron's biggest west coast refinery. (Corporate headquarters are only 25 miles away.) Sirens go off during excessive leaks of toxins like ammonia, and as if out of a horror movie, an [explosion at the plant](#) in 1999 that sent an 18,000-pound plume of sulfur dioxide fumes into the air was said to be so nasty it took the fur off squirrels.

Chevron is one of the biggest corporations on the planet. While the average income for a human being in Richmond is a little over \$19,000, Chevron's profits last year were [\\$24 billion](#), meaning the corporation is more than one million times as rich as the average citizen there. Nonetheless, the humans there won a huge victory recently, [preventing](#) the corporation from expanding and retooling its refinery so that it could process even dirtier crude oil (with dirtier local emissions, in a place that already suffers huge health consequences from the monster in its backyard). It may be the world's first victory against refinery expansion.

Chevron is both the state's biggest single greenhouse-gas emitter and a huge financial force in Richmond elections, invariably funding campaigns against green candidates. The mostly poor, mostly nonwhite citizens of Richmond are, however, organized and motivated, so if you want to watch a [monster movie](#) in which the little guys have been winning lately, follow city politics there.

One of the cool things about the West County Toxics Coalition, the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, the Green Party mayor, and the activists working with them is that they know better than anyone how to act locally and think globally, and even sometimes how to act globally and think locally. Maybe collectively they're not so little. They're allied with antiwar groups, with Burmese human rights groups, with the people of Ecuador and Nigeria who have [suffered petro-contamination](#) at least as bad, if not worse than BP's Gulf spill this spring, with groups around the world fighting the petrobeast. There's a [movement out there](#), and sometimes it even wins amazing victories.

Around the world this month, [350.org](#) coordinated more than 7,000 demonstrations in favor of lowering atmospheric carbon to a sane 350 parts per million, while the climate justice movement had a global day of action on Columbus Day. Among the month's heroic efforts were direct action against mountaintop-removal coal mining in West Virginia, blockades of refineries in France and Britain and of a coal-fired power plant in Germany, protests and gas-station blockades in Canada, and a rally in the Philippines, a demonstration in Finland, a march in Ecuador, a protest in South Africa, among others. In California, activists worked steadily against Prop. 23.

Think for a minute about horror movies: in some of them, the little people rally and do heroic things and the monsters or aliens are vanquished. The forces that have come together against Prop. 23 are impressive, ranging from inner-city job coalitions and traditional environmental groups to university think tanks and business interests. Winning or losing, however, depends on what happens when California voters look at that deceptive label "California Jobs Initiative" on their ballots on November 2nd.

If your heart isn't pounding, and you aren't biting your fingernails and teetering at the edge of your seat, then you haven't noticed the monsters yet. Look carefully. They're all around us -- and they're coming for you.

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Rebecca Solnit's brother David does organizing work against Chevron, and she often shows up for the marches. She is the author of 13 books, including the forthcoming [Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas](#) (which maps toxins and right-wing corporations in the Bay Area, among other things) and [A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster](#). She writes for [Tomdispatch.com](#) as often as she can. It's her personal version of being David in the face of all those Goliaths. To catch Solnit discussing "mixed-up California" in a Timothy MacBain TomCast audio interview, click [here](#) or, to download it to your iPod, [here](#).

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Chris Hedges: The World Liberal Opportunists Made

The World Liberal Opportunists Made

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 25, 2010 | TruthDig | CommonDreams | OpEdNews

The lunatic fringe of the Republican Party, which looks set to make sweeping gains in the midterm elections, is the direct result of a collapse of liberalism. It is the product of bankrupt liberal institutions, including the press, the church, universities, labor unions, the arts and the Democratic Party. The legitimate rage being expressed by disenfranchised workers toward the college-educated liberal elite, who abetted or did nothing to halt the corporate assault on the poor and the working class of the last 30 years, is not misplaced. The liberal class is guilty. The liberal class, which continues to speak in the prim and obsolete language of policies and issues, refused to act. It failed to defend traditional liberal values during the long night of corporate assault in exchange for its position of privilege and comfort in the corporate state. The virulent right-wing backlash we now experience is an expression of the liberal class' flagrant betrayal of the citizenry.

The liberal class, which once made piecemeal and incremental reform possible, functioned traditionally as a safety valve. During the Great Depression, with the collapse of capitalism, it made possible the New Deal. During the turmoil of the 1960s, it provided legitimate channels within the system to express the discontent of African-Americans and the anti-war movement. But the liberal class, in our age of neo-feudalism, is now powerless. It offers nothing but empty rhetoric. It refuses to concede that power has been wrested so efficiently from the hands of citizens by corporations that the Constitution and its guarantees of personal liberty are irrelevant. It does not act to mitigate the suffering of tens of millions of Americans who now make up a growing and desperate permanent underclass. And the disparity between the rhetoric of liberal values and the rapacious system of inverted totalitarianism the liberal class serves makes liberal elites, including Barack Obama, a legitimate source of public ridicule. The liberal class, whether in universities, the press or the Democratic Party, insists on clinging to its privileges and comforts even if this forces it to serve as an apologist for the expanding cruelty and exploitation carried out by the corporate state.

Populations will endure repression from tyrants as long as these rulers continue to effectively manage and wield power. But human history has amply demonstrated that once those in positions of power become redundant and impotent, yet retain the trappings and privileges of power, they are swiftly and brutally discarded. Tocqueville observed that the French, on the eve of their revolution, hated the aristocrats about to lose their power far more than they had ever hated them before. The increased hatred directed at the aristocratic class occurred because as the aristocracy lost real power there was no decline in their fortunes. As long as the liberal class had even limited influence, whether through the press or the legislative process, liberals were tolerated and even respected. But once the liberal class lost all influence it became a class of parasites. The liberal class, like the déclassé French aristocracy, has no real function within the power elite. And the rising right-wing populists, correctly, ask why liberals should be tolerated when their rhetoric bears no relation to reality and their presence has no influence on power.

The death of the liberal class, however, is catastrophic for our democracy. It means there is no longer any check to a corporate apparatus designed to further enrich the power elite. It means we cannot halt the plundering of the nation by Wall Street speculators and corporations. An ineffectual liberal class, in short, means there is no hope, however remote, of a correction or a reversal through the political system and electoral politics. The liberals' disintegration ensures that the frustration and anger among the working and the middle class will find expression in a rejection of traditional liberal institutions and the civilities of a liberal democracy. The very forces that co-opted the liberal class and are responsible for the impoverishment of the state will, ironically, reap benefits from the collapse. These corporate manipulators are busy channeling rage away from the corporate and military forces hollowing out the nation from the inside and are turning that anger toward the weak remnants of liberalism. It does not help our cause that liberals indeed turned their backs on the working and middle class.

The corporate state has failed to grasp the vital role the liberal class traditionally plays in sustaining a stable power system. The corporate state, by emasculating the liberal class, has opted for a closed system of polarization, gridlock and political theater in the name of governance. It has ensured a further destruction of state institutions so that government becomes even more ineffectual and despised. The collapse of the constitutional state, presaged by the death of the liberal class, has created a power vacuum that a new class of speculators, war profiteers, gangsters and killers, historically led by charismatic demagogues, will enthusiastically fill. It opens the door to overtly authoritarian and fascist movements. These movements rise to prominence by ridiculing and taunting the liberal class for its weakness, hypocrisy and uselessness. The promises of these proto-fascist movements are fantastic and unrealistic, but their critiques of the liberal class are grounded in truth.

The liberal class, despite becoming an object of public scorn, still prefers the choreographed charade. Liberals decry, for example, the refusal of the Democratic Party to restore habeas corpus or halt the looting of the U.S. Treasury on behalf of Wall Street speculators, but continue to support a president who cravenly serves the interests of the corporate state. As long as the charade of democratic participation is played, the liberal class does not have to act. It can maintain its privileged status. It can continue to live in a fictional world where democratic reform and responsible government exist. It can pretend it has a voice and influence in the corridors of power. But the uselessness of the liberal class is not lost on the tens of millions of Americans who suffer the awful indignities of the corporate state.

The death of the liberal class cuts citizens off from the mechanisms of power. Liberal institutions such as the church, the press, the university, the Democratic Party, the arts and labor unions once set the parameters for limited self-criticism and small, incremental reforms and offered hope for piecemeal justice and change. The liberal class could decry the excesses of the state, work to mitigate them and champion basic human rights. It posited itself as the conscience of the nation. It permitted the nation, through its appeal to public virtues and the public good, to define itself as being composed of a virtuous and even noble people. The liberal class was permitted a place within a capitalist democracy because it also vigorously discredited radicals within American society who openly defied the excesses of corporate capitalism and who denounced a political system run by and on behalf of corporations. The real enemy of the liberal class has never been Glenn Beck, but [Noam Chomsky](#).

The purging and silencing of independent and radical thinkers as well as iconoclasts have robbed the liberal class of vitality. The liberal class has cut itself off from the roots of creative and bold thought, from those forces and thinkers who could have prevented the liberal class from merging completely with the power elite. Liberals exude a tepid idealism utterly divorced from daily life. And this is why every television clip of Barack Obama is so palpably pathetic.

Unions, organizations formerly steeped in the doctrine of class warfare and filled with those who sought broad social and political rights for the working class, have been transformed into domesticated junior partners of the capitalist class. Cars rolling out of the Ford and GM plants in Michigan were said to have been made by Ford-UAW. And where unions still exist, they have been reduced to simple bartering tools, if that. The social demands of unions early in the 20th century that gave the working class weekends off, the right to strike, the eight-hour workday and Social Security have been abandoned. Universities, especially in political science and economics departments, parrot the discredited ideology of unregulated capitalism and globalization. They have no new ideas. Artistic expression, along with most religious worship, is largely self-absorbed narcissism meant to entertain without offense. The Democratic Party and the press have become courtiers to the power elite and corporate servants.

Once the liberal class can no longer moderate the savage and greedy inclinations of the capitalist class, once, for example, labor unions are reduced to the role of bartering away wage increases and benefits, once public education is gutted and the press no longer gives a voice to the poor and the working class, liberals become as despised as the power elite they serve. The collapse of liberal institutions means those outside the circles of power are trapped, with no recourse, and this is why many Americans are turning in desperation toward idiotic right-wing populists who at least understand the power of hatred as a mobilizing force.

The liberal class no longer holds within its ranks those who have the moral autonomy or physical courage to defy the power elite. The rebels, from Chomsky to [Sheldon Wolin](#) to Ralph Nader, have been marginalized, shut out of the national debate and expelled from liberal institutions. The liberal class lacks members with the vision and fortitude to challenge dominant free market ideologies. It offers no ideological alternatives. It remains bound to a Democratic Party that has betrayed every

basic liberal principle including universal healthcare, an end to our permanent war economy, a robust system of public education, a vigorous defense of civil liberties, job creation, the right to unionize and welfare for the poor.

“The left once dismissed the market as exploitative,” [Russell Jacoby](#) writes. “It now honors the market as rational and humane. The left once disdained mass culture as exploitative; now it celebrates it as rebellious. The left once honored independent intellectuals as courageous; now it sneers at them as elitist. The left once rejected pluralism as superficial; now it worships it as profound. We are witnessing not simply a defeat of the left, but its conversion and perhaps inversion.”

Capitalism, and especially corporate capitalism, was once viewed as a system to be fought. But capitalism is no longer challenged in public discourse. Capitalist bosses, men such as Warren Buffett, George Soros and Donald Trump, are treated bizarrely as sages and celebrities, as if greed and manipulation had become the highest moral good. As Wall Street steals billions of taxpayer dollars, as it perpetrates massive fraud to throw people out of their homes, as the ecosystem that sustains the planet is polluted and destroyed, we do not know what to do or say. We have been robbed of a vocabulary to describe reality. We decry the excesses of capitalism without demanding a dismantling of the corporate state. Our pathetic response is to be herded to political rallies by skillful publicists to shout inanities like “Yes we can!”

The liberal class is finished. Neither it nor its representatives will provide the leadership or resistance to halt our slide toward despotism. The liberal class prefers comfort and privilege to confrontation. It will not halt the corporate assault or thwart the ascendancy of the corporate state. It will remain intolerant within its ranks of those who do. The liberal class now honors an unwritten quid pro quo, one set in place by Bill Clinton, to cravenly serve corporate interests in exchange for money, access and admittance into the halls of power. The press, the universities, the labor movement, the arts, the church and the Democratic Party, fearful of irrelevance and desperate to retain their positions within the corporate state, will accelerate their purges of those who speak the unspeakable, those who name what cannot be named. It is the gutless and bankrupt liberal class, even more than the bizarre collection of moral and intellectual trolls now running for office, who are our most perfidious opponents.

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Chris Hedges writes [a regular column](#) for Truthdig.com. Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: [War Is A Force That Gives Us Meaning](#), [What Every Person Should Know About War](#), and [American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America](#). His most recent book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

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[Bill Quigley: Socialism? The Rich Are Winning the US Class War](#)

Socialism? The Rich Are Winning the US Class War: Facts Show Rich Getting Richer, Everyone Else Poorer

by Bill Quigley [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 25, 2010 | CommonDreams | CounterCurrents

The rich and their paid false prophets are doing a bang up job deceiving the poor and middle class. They have convinced many that an evil socialism is alive in the land and it is taking their fair share. But the deception cannot last – facts say otherwise.

Yes, there is a class war – the war of the rich on the poor and the middle class – and the rich are winning. That war has been going on for years. Look at the facts – facts the rich and their false paid prophets do not want people to know.

Let Glen Beck go on about socialists descending on Washington. Allow Rush Limbaugh to rail about “class warfare for a leftist agenda that will destroy our society.” They are well compensated false prophets for the rich.

The truth is that for the several decades the rich in the US have been getting richer and the poor and middle class have been getting poorer. Look at the facts then make up your own mind.

Poor Getting Poorer: Facts

The official US poverty numbers show we now have the highest number of poor people in 51 years. The official US poverty rate is 14.3 percent or 43.6 million people in poverty. One in five children in the US is poor; one in ten senior citizens is poor. Source: US Census Bureau.

One of every six workers, 26.8 million people, is unemployed or underemployed. This “real” unemployment rate is over 17%. There are 14.8 million people designated as “officially” unemployed by the government, a rate of 9.6 percent. Unemployment is worse for African American workers of whom 16.1 percent are unemployed. Another 9.5 million people who are working only part-time while they are seeking full-time work but have had their hours cut back or are so far only able to find work part-time are not counted in the official unemployment numbers. Also, an additional 2.5 million are reported unemployed but not counted because they are classified as discouraged workers in part because they have been out of work for more than 12 months. Source: US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics October 2010 report.

The median household income for whites in the US is \$51,861; for Asians it is \$65,469; for African Americans it is \$32,584; for Latinos it is \$38,039. Source: US Census Bureau.

Fifty million people in the US lack health insurance. Source: US Census Bureau.

Women in the US have a greater lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy-related conditions than women in 40 other countries. African American US women are nearly 4 times more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications than white women. Source: Amnesty International Maternal Health Care Crisis in the USA.

About 3.5 million people, about one-third of which are children, are homeless at some point in the year in the US. Source: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

Outside Atlanta, 33,000 people showed up to seek applications for low cost subsidized housing in August 2010. When Detroit offered emergency utility and housing assistance to help people facing evictions, more than 50,000 people showed up for the 3,000 vouchers. Source: News reports.

There are 49 million people in the US who live in households which eat only because they receive food stamps, visit food pantries or soup kitchens for help. Sixteen million are so poor they have skipped meals or foregone food at some point in the last year. This is the highest level since statistics have been kept. Source: US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Middle Class Going Backward: Facts

One or two generations ago it was possible for a middle class family to live on one income. Now it takes two incomes to try to enjoy the same quality of life. Wages have not kept up with inflation; adjusted for inflation they have lost ground over the past ten years. The cost of housing, education and health care have all increased at a much higher rate than wages and salaries. In 1967, the middle 60 percent of households received over 52% of all income. In 1998, it was down to 47%. The share going to the poor has also fallen, with the top 20% seeing their share rise. Source: [Mark Trumball, “Obama’s challenge: reversing a decade of middle-class decline,” Christian Science Monitor, January 25, 2010.](#)

A record 2.8 million homes received a foreclosure notice in 2009, higher than both 2008 and 2007. In 2010, the rate is expected to be rise to 3 million homes. Sources: Reuters and RealtyTrac.

Eleven million homeowners (about one in four homeowners) in the US are “under water” or owe more on their mortgages than their house is worth. Source: “Home truths,” The Economist, October 23, 2010.

For the first time since the 1940s, the real incomes of middle-class families are lower at the end of the business cycle of the 2000s than they were at the beginning. Despite the fact that the American workforce is working harder and smarter than ever, they are sharing less and less in the benefits they are creating. This is true for white families but even truer for African American families whose gains in the 1990s have mostly been eliminated since then. Source: [Jared Bernstein and Heidi Shierholz, State of Working America](#).

Rich Getting Richer: Facts

The wealth of the richest 400 people in the US grew by 8% in the last year to \$1.37 trillion. Source: Forbes 400: The super-rich get richer, September 22, 2010, Money.com

The top Hedge Fund Manager of 2009, David Tepper, “earned” \$4 billion last year. The rest of the top ten earned: \$3.3 billion, \$2.5 billion, \$2.3 billion, \$1.4 billion, \$1.3 billion (tie for 6th and 7th place), \$900 million (tie for 8th and 9th place), and in last place out of the top ten, \$825 million. Source: [Business Insider. “Meet the top 10 earning hedge fund managers of 2009.”](#)

Income disparity in the US is now as bad as it was right before the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s. From 1979 to 2006, the richest 1% more than doubled their share of the total US income, from 10% to 23%. The richest 1% have an average annual income of more than \$1.3 million. For the last 25 years, over 90% of the total growth in income in the US went to the top 10% earners – leaving 9% of all income to be shared by the bottom 90%. Source: [Jared Bernstein and Heidi Shierholz, State of Working America](#).

In 1973, the average US CEO was paid \$27 for every dollar paid to a typical worker; by 2007 that ratio had grown to \$275 to \$1. Source: [Jared Bernstein and Heidi Shierholz, State of Working America](#).

Since 1992, the average tax rate on the richest 400 taxpayers in the US dropped from 26.8% to 16.62%. Source: [US Internal Revenue Service](#).

The US has the greatest inequality between rich and poor among all Western industrialized nations and it has been getting worse for 40 years. The World Factbook, published by the CIA, includes an international ranking of the inequality among families inside of each country, called the Gini Index. The US ranking of 45 in 2007 is the same as Argentina, Cameroon, and Cote d’Ivoire. The highest inequality can be found in countries like Namibia, South Africa, Haiti and Guatemala. The US ranking of 45 compares poorly to Japan (38), India (36), New Zealand, UK (34), Greece (33), Spain (32), Canada (32), France (32), South Korea (31), Netherlands (30), Ireland (30), Australia (30), Germany (27), Norway (25), and Sweden (23). Source: [CIA The World Factbook](#).

Rich people live an average of about five years longer than poor people in the US. Naturally, gross inequality has consequences in terms of health, exposure to unhealthy working conditions, nutrition and lifestyle. In 1980, the most well off in the US had a life expectancy of 2.8 years over the least well-off. As the inequality gap widens, so does the life expectancy gap. In 1990, the gap was a little less than 4 years. In 2000, the least well-off could expect to live to age of 74.7 while the most well off had a life expectancy of 79.2 years. Source: [Elise Gould, “Growing disparities in life expectancy,” Economic Policy Institute](#).

Conclusion

These are extremely troubling facts for anyone concerned about economic fairness, equality of opportunity, and justice.

Thomas Jefferson once observed that the systematic restructuring of society to benefit the rich over the poor and middle class is a natural appetite of the rich. “Experience declares that man is the only animal which devours his own kind, for I can apply no milder term to...the general prey of the rich on the poor.” But Jefferson also knew that justice can only be

delayed so long when he said, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

The rich talk about the rise of socialism to divert attention from the fact that they are devouring the basics of the poor and everyone else. Many of those crying socialism the loudest are doing it to enrich or empower themselves. They are right about one thing – there is a class war going on in the US. The rich are winning their class war, and it is time for everyone else to fight back for economic justice.

Bill Quigley is [Legal Director](#) of the [Center for Constitutional Rights](#) and professor of law at Loyola University New Orleans. You can reach Bill at quigley77@gmail.com

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Mapping Global Wealth

Credit Suisse reveals the world's staggering inequality.

by Sam Pizzigati [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 25, 2010 | OtherWords | CommonDreams

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:16 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Sunday, October 24, 2010

[Mike Whitney: Thank God for France](#)

Thank God for France

By Mike Whitney [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 21, 2010 | Information Clearing House | Counterpunch

Thank God for France. While American liberals tremble at the idea of sending an angry e mail to congress for fear that their name will appear on the State Department's list of terrorists, French workers are on the front lines choking on tear gas and fending off billyclubs in hand-to-hand combat with Sarkozy's Gendarmerie. That's because the French haven't forgotten their class roots. When the government gets too big for its britches, people pour out onto the streets and Paris becomes a warzone replete with overturned Mercedes Benzs, smashed storefront windows, and stacks of smoldering tires issuing pillars of black smoke. This is what democracy looks like when it hasn't been emasculated by decades of propaganda and consumerism. Here's a blurp from the trenches:

Headline: "French Energy Sector Crippled by Nationwide Strike... French energy facilities are close to total disruption in the wake of nationwide strike against the raise of the retirement age.....France has been hit by numerous protests across the country against a controversial pension reform that would rise the retirement age to 62 from 60....On October 22 morning 80 protesters blockaded Grandpuits oil refinery outside Paris, key supplier for Charles de Gaulle and Orly international airport." (The Financial)

They're shutting 'em down.

Take note, Tea Party crybabies who moan about restoring "our freedoms" while stuffing the backyard bunker with seed corn and ammo. Glenn Beck won't save you from the "mean old" gov'mint. Liberty isn't free anymore. If you want it, get out of the barko-lounger and organize. The amount of freedom that any nation enjoys is directly proportionate to the amount of blood its people spilled fighting the state. No more, no less. The man who is willing to accept the blunt force of a

cop's truncheon on his back is infinitely more praiseworthy than the leftist/rightist scribe crooning from the bleachers. The state isn't moved by lyrical editorials or prosaic manifestos. It responds to force alone, which is why it takes people who are willing to "throw themselves on the gears" of the apparatus and stop it from moving forward. Unfortunately, most of those people appear to live in France.

The resistance is steadily building in France. The budding rebellion is cropping up everywhere---"secondary schools, train stations, refineries and highways have been blockaded, there have been occupations of public buildings, workplaces, commercial centers, directed cuts of electricity, and ransacking of electoral institutions and town halls..." And the big unions are calling for more strikes, more agitation, more ferment.

For more than a week, transportation has been blocked across the France due to the protests by students and workers. Sarkozy's popularity has plummeted. 65% of people surveyed don't like the way the French president is handling the strikes. 79% of the people would like to see Sarkozy negotiate with the Union on terms and conditions, but he won't budge. Thus, the cauldron continues to boil while the prospect of violence rises.

"STRIKE, BLOCKADE, SABOTAGE"

This is from an anonymous striker:

"In each city, these actions are intensifying the power struggle and demonstrate that many are no longer satisfied with the order imposed by the union leadership. In the Paris region, amongst the blockades of train stations and secondary schools, the strikes in the primary schools, the workers pickets in front of the factories, people create inter-professional meetings and collectives of struggle are founded to destroy categorical isolation and separation. Their starting point: self-organization to meet the need to take ownership over our struggles without the mediation of those who claim to speak for workers.

We decided Saturday to occupy the Opera Bastille. This was to disturb a presentation that was live on radio, to play the trouble makers in a place where the cultural merchandise circulates and to organize an assembly there. So we met with more than a thousand people at the "place de la nation", with banners stating "the bosses understand only one language: Strike, blockade, sabotage." (end of communique)

The action was met with predictable police violence and mass arrests.

The pension turmoil is not limited to France either. US pension funds are underfunded by nearly \$3 trillion. Will US workers be as willing as their French counterparts to face the beatings (to defend "what's theirs") or will they throw up their hands and appeal to Obama for help?

There's no question that Washington elites have joined with Wall Street to offload the massive debts from the financial meltdown onto workers and retirees. Nor is there any doubt that they will invoke (what Slavoj Zizek calls) a "permanent state of economic emergency" to justify their actions. That will allow them to move ahead with so-called "austerity measures" that are designed to impoverish workers and strip popular government programs of their funding. The trend towards belt-tightening merely masks the ongoing class war which is aimed at restoring a feudal system of royalty and serfs. This is from an article by economist Mark Weisbrot:

"If the French want to keep the retirement age as is, there are plenty of ways to finance future pension costs without necessarily raising the retirement age. One of them, which has support among the French left – and which Sarkozy claims to support at the international level -- would be a tax on financial transactions. Such a "speculation tax" could raise billions of dollars of revenue – as it currently does in the U.K. – while simultaneously discouraging speculative trading in financial assets and derivatives. The French unions and protesters are demanding that the government consider some of these more progressive alternatives."

But the retirement age is not really the issue at all. This is about union busting and "putting people in their place." It's about "who will call-the-shots" and in whose interests will society be run.

The French are fighting back against this oligarchy of racketeers and the ripoff system they represent, while, namby-pamby Americans are placated by signing their umpteenth petition or venting their spleen at a Palin rally.

Vive la France. Vive la Résistance.

Mike Whitney lives in Washington state and can be reached at fergiwhitney@msn.com

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Sarkozy Should Retire, says France

By taking to the streets to defend their pension rights from regressive cuts, the French are fighting for all our benefits

By Mark Weisbrot [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | The Guardian | ICH

The Guardian/UK [home page](#)

France Shut-down Over Retirement Age Battle

Workers who have contributed to France's steadily increasing wealth over decades are enraged that Sarkozy is re-neging on his campaign promise to not raise retirement age.

Agence France Presse [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | Agence France Presse | AlterNet

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Collapse of Social Security: French Workers Confront the Neoliberal Policy Agenda

"Work Harder to Earn Less" : French Fury in the EU Cage.

by Diana Johnstone [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | Counterpunch | Global Research

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Vishnu Bhagwat: Globalization and Militarization

Globalization and Militarization: The Root Causes of the Worldwide War against Humanity

by Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat [article link](#)

October 23, 2010 | Global Research

The following text was first presented to the International Physicians for prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) Conference, Delhi, March 10, 2008

“There will be no peace. At any given moment for the rest of our lives ; there will be multiple conflicts in mutating forms around the globe...violent conflicts will dominate the headlines.....” A ‘perpetual war for perpetual peace’ ...’ Wolfowitz and Perle in the preamble of the draft of the ‘Project for the New American Century’ in the heady days in 1992, when the Soviet Union had been subverted at its very top. The ‘ New World Order’ demands the control and seizure of oil and mineral resources and markets of every country by military force or through proxy governments and comprador elites, camouflaged as ‘ Globalisation’; preceded by subversion of targeted countries. Hence the new colonial project is unprecedented on a historical scale within countries and societies, and overseas.

The leader of one of the earliest movements to understand this militarized ‘New World Order’, Subcomandante Marcos the leader of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, declared in relation to NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement that neoliberal globalisation was a “ world war waged by financial power (oligarchies) against humanity” and the expression of the worldwide crisis of capitalism and not its success.

On 19 October 2001, US Vice President Cheney, stated that the “New war may never end. At least not in our life time. The way I think of it, it’s a new normalcy”.

The NSSD of 1 March 2005 says “America is a Nation at war’. In September 2005 Cheney again asserted that the War (on terror) could go on for several decades, just as periodical assertions come regarding the war and occupation for decades in Iraq and Afghanistan, the planning for the ‘long war’, the new Middle-East to be balkanized into state-lets, just as the USSR was, South Asia to fall in line or be divided into financial principalities to serve the ‘metropolitan core or center’ and so on for Globalisation or global finance capital, to integrate all markets (nation states may continue to exist as enfeebled entities to preserve local law and order of their populace and to transfer their budgetary surpluses to the ‘core’. The Washington Consensus is about this. It had claimed to lead global freedom, prosperity and economic growth through ‘deregulation, liberalization and privatization’). “ Is there an alternative to plundering the earth ? Is there an alternative to making war ? Is there an alternative to destroying the planet ?” (Wehrlof)

In the meanwhile, militarisation of Space, weaponisation of the sea-bed, unfettered use of low radiation nuclear warfare with Depleted Uranium, not just killing and infecting with cancer and leukaemia but poisoning the air, water, flora, fauna and every speck of dust for ever, readiness to use chemical, germ and gene warfare agents, destruction of water and sanitary systems, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Gaza are being demonstrated before our eyes. The soldier in uniform now constitutes only a very small proportion of the casualties which are overwhelmingly civilian--- women, children, men-- schools, hospitals, homes and work places. In percentage terms collateral damage, as people are termed, is ninety percent of the casualties.

Statistics do not always convey the sufferings of humanity. However, if the first world war caused about 17 million maimed and dead, the second great war around 50 million dead, followed by millions murdered in Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Congo, Angola, Rwanda, and now in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon, the continuing civil war raging in Congo (5 million), the mass murders in Indonesia, Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and the myriad civil wars ignited by the corporations in different corners of the world, are still taking their toll.

Incidentally, when Madeline Albright then US Secretary of State was asked her response to the sanctions on Iraq, in the wake of the 1991 Gulf war, which had caused the loss of half a million children’s lives and "was it worth it", she blandly replied “I think so”. This sums up the ruthless psychology and policy dictating this period of contemporary history, its economic policy with militarization as its adjunct.

Briefly, Globalisation is a multi-pronged drive for capture and control of resources, by finance capital and the dominant Transnational Corporations leading to wars for resources, not of territory which is incidental, to the extent that control of territory is necessary to enslave a society for its resources. How does it proceed apace ? What are the driving forces ? How is it organized ? Who are the key players ? Why has it taken such an all pervasive, brutal form ?

How has it evolved historically? Why is it unending? What political and economic ideologies dominate it? Where is it leading humanity and the world to?

Neoliberal globalisation is a type of totalitarian neo-mercantilism in which all resources, markets, all money and financial institutions, all profits, all means of production, all investment opportunities and all power belongs to the corporations. In the new world order, democracy appears outdated for it hinders business (Hardt /Negri / Chomsky and Werlhof). The notion of people as a sovereign body has practically been abolished and real democracy is largely non-existent, except the manipulated form, suitably greased by corporate funding without the substance of democratic policy making, with people at its core.

This system is supported by the corporate media, its monopoly ownership and alliance with what has been aptly described as the ‘War Corporations’ and the latter’s incestuous relationships with the power elites and the ruling establishments to permit them unbridled profiteering and predatory operations. International law, the UN Charter, the Geneva and Hague conventions, the rule of law have all been cast aside. In addition the military is virtually placed at the disposal of the financial elites' corporate boardrooms to maximize destruction in the quickest time period with no thought of the loss of

civilian life, property and infrastructure, camouflaged in certain cases by so called ‘ humanitarian intervention’ under the auspices of the United Nations .

To give only one example, NBC, America's network TV, is an arm of General Electric, the manufacturer of F-16, B-2, Apache, Abrams tank, A-10 aircraft engines and so on. Murdoch, the media baron's empire is always in the forefront to beat the war drums through the Corporate media an adjunct of war and the inciting of sectarian strife.

The age of colonization is replete with the horrors of loot, genocide, man made famines, plunder, pillage, deceit, fraud and the intimate partnership between the trading companies and the colonial armies. In more recent times in the last century, oil became the reason for the great colonial enterprises of the European, Anglo-US, German and Japanese wars of aggression and the precursor of Oil politics in the New World Order (with the smoke screen to make the world safe for freedom and democracy).

Contemporary wars have devastated whole societies where one sees not democracies but corpses of the victims of some of the most technologically advanced weapons known to mankind. These weapons increase the scale and magnitude of this process of "collective killing".

As recently as the second World War, while soldiers were the cannon fodder for the Allies and the Axis powers, their big banks, corporations were in covert partnerships. In Germany, Italy and Spain, Ford, GM. Standard Oil, Dupont, Union Carbide, Dow Chemicals, Westinghouse, GE, IBM, the Bank of New York and the famous Bank of International Settlements had close financial and business dealings with Germany's Thyssen, Krupps, IG Farben conglomerates along with German banks who in fact bank-rolled the Nazi Party. That is why as the allied forces marched into Germany in 1945 they were told to bypass several industries and businesses which had links to Anglo-US interests.

German Fortune 500 companies, Krupps and IG Farben amongst others were charged in 1948 following the main Nuremberg Trials with “ the preparation, initiation and waging wars of aggression and invasions of other countries “ and “the plunder of public and private property ...conspiracies to commit crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the use of slave labour”. Due to the influence of powerful political interests, as US interest in Europe became one of countering Soviet influence and protecting the common political and economic systems of the allies and the Axis, (except the USSR), the Directors and executives were given minor sentences for the lesser charges of pillage and use of slave labour, rendering incomplete the task of the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials. (see Niloufer Bhagwat, Privatizing War)

In Africa, Angola and Congo in the 1960s and 70s are prime examples of "civil wars" and genocide fostered by the oil and mining MNCs. Hungry, unclothed men, women and children have been living and sleeping in the wet and cold, atop mounds and jungles below which lie diamonds, precious stones and strategic raw materials which make for the arsenals that kill mankind across the globe.

Can there be co-existence between humanity and this culture of military seizure?

Neo-liberal globalisation is tantamount to subordination of policy and decision making to corporate rule. “Freedom of the economy means the freedom of the corporations”.

There is the underlying insistence that all nations must abide by the diktats of the world "free markets" which means the diktat of the major financial, oil, weapons corporations, and there is the threat of military action should any country be judged to have deviated from the path.

It is the corporations –not the ‘market’, that determines today's rules of trade, prices and legal regulations.

The recent shift from consumer goods to armaments is a particularly troubling development (Chossudovsky 2003) with new forms of “enclosures” emerging with privatization of public industries and “commons” what was free and accessible to mankind as a whole, like water, rain forests, regions of bio-diversity or geographical interest like pipeline routes, oceans etc. are now a part of the new enclosures of privatization with the threat of military control of the heritage of mankind as a whole.

It is the corporations that dictate policy and as far as they are concerned there is no place for democratic convention: 'res public turns into a res privata.' The ones who get in their way or challenge their "rights" are vilified and to an increasing degree defined as 'terrorists'.

The US President has declared the possibility of "pre-emptive nuclear strikes" should the US so decide. Current US Doctrine for nuclear weapons 2007, authorizes Theatre Commanders their use on "targets that can withstand non –nuclear attacks (tunnels, underground strikes etc). Also in retaliation for military, biological, chemical weapons ...or IN THE EVENT OF SURPRISING MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS (against US forces) of an unspecified nature. Mini-nukes (up to six times the size of the Hiroshima atom bomb) are described as conventional ordnance.

Neoliberalism and war are two sides of the same coin. War is not only good for the economy but is indeed its driving force: "Continuation of the economy by other means. "War and economy have become almost indistinguishable (Werlhof 2005)"...The Gulf wars and the conflicts in Africa starting with Congo, Angola, Chad, Rwanda and the threats to Sudan, Somalia and Iran are obvious examples. Militarism once again appears as the "executor of capital accumulation." (Luxemburg 1970)--- potentially everywhere and enduringly.

A few examples of what globalisation in its different manifestations has led to in the erstwhile USSR, Yugoslavia and now Iraq.

In the Soviet Union, the General Secretary of the CPSU sold out, despite an overwhelming Referendum vote in favour of the Union, a letter signed by Marshal SF Akhromeyev, Chief of the General Staff and 200 Generals and Admirals, all deputies of the Duma, the Soviet Parliament, opposing the move by Gorbachev and comparing his act to worse than the Nazi invasion which failed to annihilate the Soviet Union. In a putsch backed by the West and its propaganda machine, unprecedented in history, the USSR politically capitulated and Yeltsin began to dismantle institutions, plants, factories to the oligarchs who simply usurped state property, sold it for a song and laundered a trillion dollars to US Banks, advised by the likes of Jeffrey Sachs, Strobe Talbot ; and the rest is history. A people and a nation brought to their knees by their own sold out leadership.

Yugoslavia was balkanized thereafter by several well planned, neo-liberal devices and measures. Alienation of the federal constituents by stopping federal grants, recognition of Croatia by Germany, privatisation of industry leading to 50 % unemployment, privatization of the Central Bank and the nomination of a non-citizen as its Governor, insistence of first charge on revenues to the World Bank –IMF, lifting of controls of food prices and other essentials causing raging profiteering and inflationbreaking up the once happy, peaceful and generally prosperous Yugoslavia that fascist forces could not overcome in the Great War. The story for the rest of Eastern Europe and the Balkans is similar. Their reconstruction is now solely in the hands of Western corporations.

By now, despite the best attempts by the corporate media, the lies used as pretexts for the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, are common knowledge. The propaganda to demonise Iran lies in shambles after the 2007 US National Intelligence Estimate was made public by the Intelligence community, even though analysts still insist that Iran has a nuclear weapons program which could serve as a pretext for military intervention, should the financial meltdown of certain power centers require the take over of another country's resources and national budget as happened in Iraq.

All reasons advanced in the UNSC and in the International community by the US at every level have been demonstrated to be manufactured, as confirmed by the leaked Downing Street Memorandum, the Niger Uranium hoax, the aluminium tubes, the non-existence of WMD mobile storages and so on.

The oil majors through their representatives in the highest levels of Government in Washington DC desire to control the oil spigots, in order not only to control and dominate the major oil consumers –Japan, China, India, Europe, a very sensitive geo-political region, but also to usurp petro-dollars (Iraq had switched to euros in October 2002), of the OPEC countries in return for useless arms imports and security protection for the rather unpopular regimes.

Zionist influence on US foreign policy through Big Business, Banks, Investment firms, financial oligarchies and the media, in Wall street and in the City –London, is documented in detail. The reality is that the practice of the ‘Revolving Door’ between the executives in the corporations and banks on the Wall Street, the White House, the Pentagon, Treasury, FED, the State department make it so much easier to ensure planning, coordination and continuity of policies as deliberated upon by the Bilderberg Group, the Trilateral Commission, the CFR, the conglomerates and generally endorsed at Davos in the WEF, by definition an alliance of Big Business and political establishments.

It is not the Pentagon but the Wall Street boardrooms which select targeted entities. President Eisenhower called it the Military-Industrial Complex. One can add the energy-oil majors to this.

It is on record that the nuclear weapons targeting plan was jointly prepared by the business executives and the military at the Offut air base in Nebraska in 2002. Halliburton and its subsidiary KBR has won hundreds of billions of single vendor contracts in Iraq and siphoned off non-metered Iraqi oil. Some little noises may be made by the GAO, that’s all ! The “reconstruction” plan for targeted countries is usually made prior to the ‘destruction’ plan in the Board Rooms ! The Central Bank of Baghdad (Iraq) is run by Morgan Stanley as a natural sequence to the great usurpation of Iraqi assets in totality, starting with the Oil Ministry and oil reserves and fields, by Bremmer’s 100 orders unprecedented in history, in open defiance of the Hague conventions, all for ‘globalisation’, the code word for the 21st century colonial project.

Lockheed Martin, Halliburton, Bechtel, Aegis, BKSH associates, Bearing Pony, Custer Battles, Loral satellite, Qualcomm, CACI and Titan and others are the beneficiaries in the Iraq war and occupation just as they have been its orchestrators with CNN, Fox, NBC (GE), Murdoch, BBC in the first place. Their stock prices have tripled, in every phase of the war. Even the Iraqi Media network is run by a former Director of the Voice of America.

Architecture & Characteristics of Globalisation

1. Implementation of the Neo-liberal Agenda is through shock therapy, structural adjustment programs, Washington Consensus. Speculative finance capital which lies at the heart of the current phase of ‘Financialisation’ of capitalism requires seemingly endless infusion of cash which necessitates more exploitation and thus more inequality. Violence is often considered a solution to all problems to control society even as economic policies impact a wider groups of citizens.
2. Subversion of key personnel in the institutions of the state.
3. Sanctions or threat of sanctions where necessary, to weaken the country targeted when a military attack is intended some months or years hence.
4. Deregulating the economy and dismantling the public sector as part of the Reforms or ‘Deform’ package.
5. Influence, control and takeover of financial institutions and later Banks, Insurance and Real estate (FIRE).
6. Takeover of the Media via the FDI route.
7. The Myth of Free Trade.
8. Control of food, seeds, land, contract farming, Futures Exchanges, pharmaceuticals via new Patents Act, IPR, robbery of genetic and bio-diversity assets.
9. Extension of pro-corporate and commercial contract laws under the pretext of modernising laws and the legal framework.
10. Steady destruction of the Environment and ecology.
11. Unsustainable consumption, provoking internal conflict and external competition or leading to wars.

12. Resort to state terrorism while crying wolf by contrived individual acts of terrorism, using a spectrum of instruments, from special forces to bombardment of civilian habitats, torture, rendition, using the 'war on terror' propaganda as a cover for military intervention to invade, occupy and foreign control of national resources. Corporate commitment to weapons in a war economy is total where 85% of the production is funded by the military as JK Galbraith says in his book 'The Economy of Innocent Fraud: Truth of our Times'.

13. Enforcing WTO rules, also referred to as the 'Economic Constitution' of the world, whose objective is to gradually annihilate the legitimate and democratically endorsed State's and people's rights and prerogatives. Davos Project 2020 shapes the road map for the 'global future' staffed as it is by executives nominated by the proliferating Transnationals whose ideology is influenced by the 'end of history' credo. IMF, WB and WTO constitute a "separate supranational state". The rules of these institutions are applied asymmetrically---least of all where such rules interfere with global finance capital and most of all where they further the exploitation of the already impoverished. Aimed at military control of the planet, through a multi-dimensional and permanent war of the North against the South.

14. Contemporary ethos of establishing hegemony is characterized by Military Keynesianism --ie the "long war" and occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq and the looming wars in the Middle-East to boost annual aggregate military expenditure to over \$ 1 trillion in the US, expansion of global military bases to over 700 and increase in production of hugely expensive armaments and munitions, their relentless exports while paying 'lip service' to developmental aid at G-8 and other UN convened conferences, and in practice disregarding 'peace and security' the founding purpose of the UN Charter.

15. "The more fundamental concern is the need to protect the West's pre-emptive claim to the financial surpluses of the Arab and oil world. This is essential for underwriting their political stability which today is irretrievable and in distinct decline." (Sukumar Muralidharan in EPW, March 1991).

16. "Globalisation is privatization of the world" as William Blum writes The Pre-emptive 'First strike option' is complementary to the idea and is being discussed at the NATO* summit in Bucharest in April (2008).

The Commander of the space shuttle that circled the earth in 2005, called and said 'the centre of Africa was burning'. She meant the Congo, in which the great rain forest of the continent was located. It needed to disappear for corporations to gain free access to the Congo's natural resources that are the reason for the wars that plague the region today. After all one needs diamonds, precious and strategic raw materials for the exotic weapons of today and tomorrow. Brazil has followed the same policy with respect to the great Amazon river basin.

Henry CK Liu, a New York based Investment banker who writes prolifically for the Asia Times notes " For the trade deficit developing economies, neo-liberal global trade makes old fashion 19th Century Imperialism look benign ..." (and its predatory wars, fraud and loot look like a teddy bear's picnic) Economic power when sufficiently vast, as in the contemporary globalised system generating unprecedented and accelerating inequalities, becomes by its very nature political power. The political power of Big Business has diminished democracy and led to the establishment of rule by an oligarchy.

Militarisation of the State and society is a natural consequence of rule by an oligarchy, focused on 'market fundamentalism' whose affects are all too visible across the globe and even within the 'core' or the metropolitan center.

Thomas Friedman of the New York Times one of the propagandists of this anti-humanity policies has summed it up graphically with nothing left to the imagination, " The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas (Manufacturers of F-15s).

Globalisation Politics in Action

The nihilism of neoliberal globalisation is evident. The whole 'Real' world is sought to be transformed into money and speculative transactions with mounds of paper money created, destructive to human welfare and development (Werlhof). The material limits of such politics becomes clearer by the day: global, ecological, economic, monetary, social and political collapse (Diamond 2005). How else can we understand the fact that in times when civilization has reached its alleged

zenith, a human being starves (to death) every second (Ziegler)? The original riches of ‘mother earth’ is now giving way to a barren wasteland.

Since the 1980s, it is mainly the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the World Bank, the IMF that act as the enforcers of neoliberalism. When the WTO was founded in 1995 in place of GATT, several agreements which operationalise it followed: The Multilateral Agreement on Investments, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the agreement on Trade-Related aspects on Intellectual Property Rights (leading to India giving up on its Patent Rights Act), and the Agreement on Agriculture, which has now been supplemented by the Agreement on Non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA). All these agreements facilitate corporate rule, and total liberation of all corporate activities. Never before, not even in colonial times, have those in power been so completely been “freed” from all responsibility for their actions (no wonder that the MAI negotiations were kept secret for years, though the EU Trade Unions knew since they were part of the TUAC and took part in the OECD conferences in Paris). Negotiations of the GATS have also been kept secret since the late 1990s. That sensitive areas like education, health or water services are excluded is a lie. Even the elements –air, water, earth, fire (energy) are increasingly turned into commodities. Financial Services, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE) are the tools for opening up the womb. The genes of plants, animals, even human-beings are sometimes pirated and made one’s own legal “property” (Thaler 2004). Vandana Shiva calls this process “trading in our lives” and in Korea “WTO kills farmers” is a popular slogan.

The transnational agribusiness corporations now even discuss a general prohibition of “traditional” farming methods. Iraqi farmers have been forced to burn their seeds and use “terminator seeds” instead –this in Mesopotamia, the “cradle of agriculture”....or “Wheat becomes a Weapon” (Krieg 1980). In India too the Iraq model is being repeated, only with a slower rate of strangulation to death of our farmers. A new infertility enters the world instead of a new creation....consequence is an artificially created death –a death with no life to follow. No one seems to know how to prevent this (Werlhof 2006)....Amongst the most ludicrous examples is the idea to distribute contraceptive GM corn developed by the Swiss company Syngenta, in regions that suffer from so called overpopulation” (Reiter 2005). Fed on it German cows died of different forms of circulatory collapse. The AoA in dumping subsidized GM food into markets of the South is threatening the survival of three billion small farmers, half the world’s population !

Today the rights of corporations are better protected by the court systems in all countries ...we may even say that “human rights ‘ only apply to corporations. Neoliberal globalisation is a conscious betrayal of the interests of 99% of the people on this planet. In both its intention and effect, a true “weapon of mass destruction”—even when no immediate wars are fought (Werlhof 2006). How many lives are sacrificed to this globalisation ? Some estimate that the numbers already go into hundreds of millions (Widerspruch 2004).

In the EU’s first draft Constitution Treaty, rejected by the referendum, there was the engagement in armament and military operations (Oberansmayer 2004). The draft of the EU constitution promised to be part of an effort to secure peace and refers to acts of war as –“humanitarian intervention”, alternatively as “acts of defense”, like the NATO* war against Yugoslavia and Afghanistan and now in Africa (wherever there is oil or strategic raw materials), alongside the US Africa Military command.. Once again neoliberal globalisation and militarism appear as Siamese twinsAll this against the backdrop of deployable nuclear weapons in Europe (Galtung 1993, Oberansmayer 2004). The EU is aware of the impending problems of shortage of water and energy in Southern Europe. At the European Security conference (Munich) 2005 it already discussed scenarios of poor people’s revolts.

Harold Pinter, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech vividly articulated as only a writer can - “ It means you infect the heart of the country, that you establish a malignant growth and watch the gangrene blow....When the populace has been subdued or beaten to death ...the Military and the great Corporations sit comfortably in power –you go before the cameras and say Democracy has prevailed.”

Will the Tide Turn?

The series of people’s movements, whether against the WTO trade talks at Seattle, Cancun, Hong Kong, GM foods, privatization of public sector enterprises, SEZs, Water privatization (Vandana Shiva says “ Denying people their human right to water is not development. It is genocide”), unemployment, forest rights and displacement from mineral rich regions,

against the War in Iraq and the indigenous people -- largely spontaneous, has been termed as the emergence of the 'second super power'.

The current revolt emerging against neo-liberalism throughout the periphery, led by the Iraqi, Palestinian, Afghan and Lebanese national resistance will be met by increased interventions from the imperial center of the System – an evil and destructive system which maims, oppresses and dishonors those who live under it and which threatens and executes devastation and death to millions around the globe, shaming the age of enlightenment, in the name of freedom and democracy. However the choice, not to resist is no choice and peoples resistance have won throughout history.

“What is really needed of course is nothing less than a different civilization. A different economy alone, or a different society or culture will not suffice... We need a civilization that is the exact opposite ... We would still be left with the damage that the earth has sufferedand all this happened within what comes to a nanosecond of the earth's history” (Werlhof).

To conclude military power no matter how strong, can never conquer the people's desire to be free and their love of peace, as post world war II history has shown in our times, though it has imposed so much suffering and will continue to do for some more time.

When neoliberal Globalisation is on a self destruct mode and its financial system heading for an abyss what holds back its demise ? The answer is the 'Ruling' elites of many nations, amongst them the petro-dollar oligarchies in collusion with military alliances, who have and continue to betray their people's interests. Since it is arraigned against entire humanity it has to be defeated by a united humanity with diverse strategies.

It is necessary to remember in times such as these, when the words “freedom and democracy” are voiced by those who have enslaved even their own societies, the wise words of Mahatma Gandhi - “Liberty and democracy become unholy when their hands are dyed Red with innocent blood.”

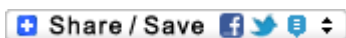
Note

* NATO—Started with a membership of 15, now has an additional 26 members and also 23 “partnership countries” -- ‘Partnership for Peace.’ It has affiliates like the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, the Mediterranean Dialogue and the GCC, all facilitating intervention, outside the UNSC, to protect human lives.

With acknowledgements to Prof Claudia von Werlhof 's paper on 'The Consequences of Globalization and Neoliberal Policies. What are the Alternatives ?' November 21, 2005, Prof Michel Chossudovsky's books –[Globalization of Poverty](#) & [America's War of Terror](#), published by Global Research.

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Saturday, October 23, 2010

[Sara Robinson: Fascist America: Is This Election the Next Turn?](#)

It's not fascism yet; but if the Tea Party manages to get its hands on the levers of power, it will be.

Fascist America: Is This Election the Next Turn?

By Sara Robinson [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | Blog for Our Future | Alternet

In August 2009, I wrote a piece titled [Fascist America: Are We There Yet?](#) that sparked much discussion on both the left and right ends of the blogosphere. In it, I argued that -- according to the best scholarship on how fascist regimes emerge -- America was on a path that was running much too close to the fail-safe point beyond which no previous democracy has ever been able to turn back from a full-on fascist state. I also noted that the then-emerging Tea Party had a lot of proto-fascist hallmarks, and that it had the potential to become a clear and present danger to the future of our democracy if it ever got enough traction to start winning elections in a big way.

On the first anniversary of that article, Jonah Goldberg -- the right's revisionist-in-chief on the subject of fascism -- actually used an entire National Review column to taunt me about what he characterized as a failure of prediction. Where's that fascist state you promised? he hooted.

It's funny he should ask. Because this coming election may, in fact, be a critical turning point on that road.

The *Fascist America* series of three articles (the other two are [here](#) and [here](#)) was built out of Robert Paxton's *Anatomy of Fascism* -- a landmark work of scholarship that lays out that specific conditions and prognosis of fascism as a political form. Paxton defined fascism as:

...a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.

Paxton laid out the five basic lifecycle stages of successful fascist movements. In the first stage, a mature industrial state facing some kind of crisis breeds a new, rural movement that's based on nationalist renewal. This movement invariably rejects reason and glorifies raw emotion, promises to restore lost national pride, co-opts the nation's traditional myths for its own purposes, and insists that the country must be purged of the toxic influence of outsiders and intellectuals who are blamed for their current misery.

(Sound familiar yet?)

In the second stage, the movement takes root, turns into a real political party, and seizes a seat at the table. Success at this stage, Paxton writes, "depends on certain relatively precise conditions: the weakness of a liberal state, whose inadequacies condemn the nation to disorder, decline, or humiliation; and political deadlock because the Right, the heir to power but unable to continue to wield it alone, refuses to accept a growing Left as a legitimate governing partner."

(Paging the Party of No....)

In the face of this deadlock, the corporate elites forge an alliance with rural nationalists, creating an unholy marriage that, if it continues, will soon breed a fascist state. And, of course, this is precisely what's happening now between the Koch Brothers, the oil companies, Americans for Prosperity, and the Tea Party.

The majority of history's would-be fascist movements have died right at this stage -- almost always because of the basic authoritarian ineptitude of their leadership, which ensured that they'd never gain anything more than a small and temporary handful of seats at the political table. The successful fascisms, on the other hand, were the ones that held together and to gained enough political leverage that capturing their governments became inevitable. And once that happened, there was no turning back, because they now had the political power and street muscle to silence any opposition. (Fascist parties almost never enjoy majority support at any stage -- but being a minority faction is only a problem in a functioning democracy. It's no problem at all if you're willing to use force to get your way.)

According to Paxton, there are three quick questions that let you know you've crossed that fail-safe line beyond which an emerging fascist regime has too much power to be stopped:

1. Are [neo- or protofascisms] becoming rooted as parties that represent major interests and feelings and wield major influence on the political scene?
2. Is the economic or constitutional system in a state of blockage apparently insoluble by existing authorities?
3. Is a rapid political mobilization threatening to escape the control of traditional elites, to the point where they would be tempted to look for tough helpers in order to stay in charge?

If the answer to all three is "yes," you're probably on for the rest of the ride, which can run for at least a decade or two before it burns through.

A year ago, I noted that we were already three for three on these questions. Now, the "yes" answers are far more resounding. With over 70 Tea Party candidates running for major state and federal offices on the ballot this November, it's fair to say that the 2010 election is shaping up as a national referendum on the Tea Party's future viability. And if they succeed at winning enough of these races, it may very well be the last vote on the subject we ever get.

The Alternatives

There are only a few ways this plays out. A few scenarios:

1. The Tea Party is rejected outright by the voters on November 2. A handful of their candidates do win their races; and for the next few years, the Democrats have a grand time pointing out their sheer wingnuttitude, bolstering a compelling case against electing any more of them in the future. The party begins to lose momentum, and in a few years is defunct.
2. The Tea Party elects a credible number of these 70-odd candidates -- enough to make a solid showing and establish its political bona fides, but not enough to get anything serious done. If this happens, progressives need to work fast and hard. If this right-wing tide continues to build as we head into the 2012 election, we'll still be cruising straight into a fascist future -- just not quite yet. There's time to stop it, but the momentum is not on our side -- and stopping it only gets harder with every passing week.
3. A solid majority of the Tea Party candidates win their races, cementing the movement's lock on the GOP and turning it into a genuine political power in this country. They've already promised us that if they take either house of Congress, the next two years will be a lurid nightmare of hearings, trials, impeachments, and character assassinations against progressives. (Which could, in the end, backfire on the GOP as badly as the Clinton impeachment did. We can hope.) Similar scorched-earth harassment awaits officials at every other level of government, too. And casual violence against immigrants, gays, and progressives may escalate as the Tea Party brownshirts become bolder, confident that at least some authorities will either back them up or look the other way.

In this scenario, the fail-safe point -- the point beyond which no country has ever turned back from the full fascist nightmare -- may well be behind us when we wake up on November 3. From there, the rest will play out in agonizing slow motion; and the character of the rest of this decade will hinge almost entirely on whether the corporatists, the militarists, or the theocrats ultimately get the upper hand in the emerging regime.

Really? Are you serious?

It's fair to wonder if the Tea Party deserves to be taken this seriously. After all, there's always been this faction in US politics -- the 10-12% rightwing authoritarian hard core that fueled McCarthyism and the Bircher movement and the Moral Majority; that voted for Goldwater and then George Wallace and even put KKK leader David Duke into office for a time. The far right has always been with us. It's one of the constants in our political landscape.

But they've always been a fringe movement, and it's mostly kept to itself. What's different now is that all the crazy ideas of the radical right -- climate and evolution denialism, banning contraception, sovereign citizenship, End Times theology, white nationalism, all of it -- have been catalyzed by the magic of the Internet and widespread economic disaster into one coherent mass subculture that, according to a Wall Street Journal poll released yesterday, has attracted a full 35% of the country's likely voters. [According to Chip Berlet](#) of Political Research Associates, the Tea Parties are a broad movement that brings together several preexisting formations on the political right:

- Economic libertarians who worry about big government collectivist tyranny
- Christian Right Conservatives who oppose liberal government social policies
- Right-wing apocalyptic Christians who fear a Satanic New World Order
- Nebulous conspiracy theorists who fear a secular New World Order
- Nationalistic ultra-patriots concerned that US sovereignty is eroding
- Xenophobic anti-immigrant white nationalists who worry about preserving the "real" America.

This unification of right-wing forces around radical far-right ideas has never happened on anything like this scale in modern American history. And it's why we need to recognize the Tea Party as something unique under the political sun -- and seriously evaluate the future that awaits us if it becomes any more powerful.

That future is a painful thing to contemplate. I've been called an alarmist for even daring to use the F-word to describe the situation we're facing. But that's one of the universal hallmarks of fascism: by the time everybody finally wakes up and realizes that they're in it, it's usually too late to do anything about it. Here's how [Milton Mayer described his experience of this](#) as the Nazi thrall descended in Germany:

In the university community, in your own community, you speak privately to your colleagues, some of whom certainly feel as you do; but what do they say? They say, 'It's not so bad' or 'You're seeing things' or 'You're an alarmist.'

And you are an alarmist. You are saying that this must lead to this, and you can't prove it. These are the beginnings, yes; but how do you know for sure when you don't know the end, and how do you know, or even surmise, the end? On the one hand, your enemies, the law, the regime, the Party, intimidate you. On the other, your colleagues pooh-pooh you as pessimistic or even neurotic.

And yet the day comes when it's all too clear, Mayer writes -- and on that day, it's too late to stand up.

Suddenly it all comes down, all at once. You see what you are, what you have done, or, more accurately, what you haven't done (for that was all that was required of most of us: that we do nothing). You remember those early meetings of your department in the university when, if one had stood, others would have stood, perhaps, but no one stood. A small matter, a matter of hiring this man or that, and you hired this one rather than that. You remember everything now, and your heart breaks. Too late. You are compromised beyond repair.

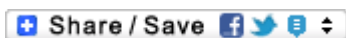
There are only a few days left before the election. Whatever you do between now and then will be a small matter -- a matter of making a few phone calls, of knocking on some doors, of following up with friends. And yet any compromise now could be the one we will remember with breaking hearts five years from now, when the country we knew is gone, and our future has been seized by people who represent the worst of everything we are.

Be the one who sees where this is taking us. Be the one who stands while you still can. The future these people have in mind for us is one that dozens of countries have already lived through; and all of them will carry the scars for centuries. It's not fascism yet; but if the Tea Party manages to get its hands on the levers of power, it will be.

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Saturday, October 23, 2010

[Ralph Nader: Ten Questions for Tea Partiers](#)

Ten Questions for Tea Partiers

by Ralph Nader [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | Ralph Nader | CommonDreams

Here are ten questions for Tea Partiers that they want or do not want to answer. I say it this way because people who call themselves Tea Partiers do not have the same view of politics, government, Big Business or the Constitution. Their opinions range from pure Libertarian to actively furthering the privileges of plutocracy. Their income and occupational background vary as well, though most seem to be middle-income and up.

My guess is that most Tea Partiers come from the conservative wing of the Republican Party who are fed up with both the corporate Republicans like Bush and Cheney, as well as the Democrats like Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi.

With the above in mind, the following questions can serve to go beyond abstractions and generalizations of indignation and get to some more specific responses.

1. Can you be against Big Government and not press for reductions in the vast military budgets, fraught with bureaucratic and large contractors' waste, fraud and abuse? Military spending now takes up half of the federal government's operating budgets. The libertarian Cato Institute believes that to cut deficits, we have to also cut the defense budget.

2. Can you believe in the free market and not condemn hundreds of billions of dollars of corporate welfare-bailouts, subsidies, handouts, and giveaways?
3. Can you want to preserve the legitimate sovereignty of our country and not reject the trade agreements known as NAFTA and GATT (The World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland) that scholars have described as the greatest surrender of local, state and national sovereignty in our history?
4. Can you be for law and order and not support a bigger and faster crackdown on the corporate crime wave, that needs more prosecutors and larger enforcement budgets to stop the stealing of taxpayers and consumer dollars so widely reported in the Wall Street Journal and Business Week? Law enforcement officials estimate that for every dollar for prosecution, seventeen to twenty dollars are returned.
5. Can you be against invasions of privacy by government and business without rejecting the provisions of the Patriot Act that leave you defenseless to constant unlawful snooping, appropriation of personal information and even search of your home without notification until 72 hours later?
6. Can you be against regulation of serious medical malpractice (over 100,000 lives lost a year, according to a study by Harvard physicians), unsafe drugs that have serious side effects or cause the very injury/illness they were sold to prevent, motor vehicles with defective brakes, tires and throttles, contaminated food from China, Mexico and domestic processors?
7. Can you keep calling for Freedom and yet tolerate control of your credit and other economic rights by hidden and arbitrary credit ratings and credit scores? What Freedom do you have when you have to sign industry-wide fine print one-sided “contracts” with your banks, insurance companies, car dealers, and credit card companies? Many of these contracts even block your Constitutional access to the courthouse.
8. Can you be for a new, clean system of politics and elections and still accept the Republican and Democratic Two Party dictatorship that is propped up by complex state laws, frivolous litigation and harassment to exclude from the ballot third parties and independent candidates who want reform, accountability, and stronger voices for the voters?
9. If you want a return to our Constitution—its principles of limited and separation of power and its emphasis on “We the People” in its preamble—can you still support Washington’s wars that have not been declared by Congress (Article I Section 8) or giving corporations equal rights with humans plus special privileges and immunities. The word “corporation” or “company” never appears in the Constitution. How can you support eminent domain powers given by governments to corporations over homeowners, or massive week-end bailouts by the Federal Reserve and Treasury Department of businesses, even reckless foreign banks, without receiving the authority and the appropriations from the Congress, as the Constitution requires?
10. You want less taxation and lower deficits. How can you succeed unless you stop big corporations from escaping their fair share of taxes by manipulating foreign jurisdictions against our tax laws, for example, or by letting trillions of dollars of speculation on Wall Street go without any sales tax, while you pay six, seven or eight percent sales tax on the necessities you buy in stores?

Let’s hear from you Tea Partiers. Meanwhile, see the work of video-journalist, Steve Ference, who has interviewed and given voice to those among you in his new paperback “[Voices of the Tea Party](#)” published by Lulu.com on July 4, 2010. Contact VoicesoftheTeaParty@gmail.com.

[Ralph Nader](#) is a consumer advocate, lawyer, and author. His most recent book - and first novel - is, [Only The Super-Rich Can Save Us](#). His most recent work of non-fiction is [The Seventeen Traditions](#).

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The Tea Parties Are Worse Than Useless

Karl Denninger on how Republicans made the TPs part of the bankster regime

by Karl Denninger [article link](#)

October 23, 2010 | Market Ticker | LewRockwell

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Why The Tea Party Elections On November 2, 2010 Will Ultimately Make No Difference

by John Dean [article link](#)

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Barry Grey: The Strike Wave in Europe and the Decay of "Democracy"

The Strike Wave in Europe and the Decay of "Democracy"

by Barry Grey [article link](#)

October 23, 2010 | WSWS | Global Research

The growing struggles of the working class in Europe and internationally against mass unemployment and government austerity policies are exposing the reality behind the façade of bourgeois democracy. In every country, the government, whether conservative or nominally “left,” is cutting jobs and wages and slashing social programs in complete disregard for the overwhelming opposition of the population.

Elections, parliamentary debates have no effect on policy. The state does the bidding of the financial aristocracy, tearing up the living standards of the masses in the interests of the bankers who are responsible for the economic crisis. The financiers and corporate executives are making more money than ever by exploiting mass unemployment and growing social distress to slash wages and increase the exploitation of the working class.

Where the best efforts of the trade unions do not suffice to hold the workers in check and struggles break out that challenge the plans of the capitalists, most prominently in France and Greece, the state uses its powers of repression to smash strikes and protests. In France, the Sarkozy government has deployed riot police to break up workers’ blockades of oil depots and attack protesting students with tear gas and rubber bullets, arresting hundreds across the country.

In Greece, the social democratic PASOK government, elected with the support of the unions, deployed the military to break a strike by truckers in August. Last week, the same government used riot police and tear gas against culture ministry employees occupying the Acropolis to protest mass layoffs.

Despite these attacks, the resistance of the working class is growing. The current wave of strikes and protests in France is the most developed expression of a new stage in the international class struggle. It marks a shift in the world political situation of historic proportions. The working class is once again entering into battle against the capitalists.

Recent days have seen the spread of the strike movement in France, the outbreak of a strike in Greece that has paralyzed the country’s rail system, and a demonstration of hundreds of thousands in Rome protesting the policies of the Berlusconi government.

There have been one-day general strikes and mass protests in Spain, Portugal and Ireland, strikes by workers in Romania, and powerful strikes by auto workers in China and by workers in India, Cambodia and Bangladesh.

In Britain, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government is imposing historically unprecedented cuts totaling 83 billion pounds, which will mean the loss of at least 500,000 jobs in the public sector and another 500,000 in the private sector.

British workers have repeatedly sought to resist the government-corporate onslaught, but have to this point been stymied by the treachery of the trade unions, which oppose any serious strike action or social mobilization. London tube workers have struck against privatization and mass layoffs, prompting the government to draw up anti-strike legislation. BBC and British Airways workers have voted for strike action, but the union leaders have refused to call them out.

In the US, Obama, who came to power by appealing to the intense hatred among working people and youth for the pro-corporate, militarist policies of Bush and the Republicans, is carrying out uniformly right-wing, anti-working class policies, shattering the illusions of millions who voted for him. The inability of the White House and the Democratic Party to in any way distance themselves from the corporate-financial elite has been underscored by the administration's actions over the past week, just two weeks before the congressional elections.

The administration has lifted the moratorium on Gulf oil drilling, announced that Social Security recipients will receive no cost-of-living increase, and rejected calls for a moratorium on home foreclosures.

The growing opposition of the American working class is finding expression in an incipient rebellion by workers against the United Auto Workers union, which is seeking to make the 50 percent wage cut for newly hired workers worked out last year between itself, the auto bosses and the Obama administration the new baseline for the industry.

The contempt of the American ruling class for the democratic will of the people was summed up in an editorial on the events in France published Tuesday by the New York Times. The major organ of the "liberal" Democratic Party establishment acknowledged that there is broad support in the French population for the strikes and protests against Sarkozy's plans to raise the retirement age. "Despite the widespread inconvenience and economic losses," it wrote, "public opinion has remained sympathetic to the unions." (French polls show upwards of 70 percent supporting the strikers).

This did not prevent the Times from insisting, "France's Parliament should give final approval to the retirement age reform bill this week," and adding, "Even with the age raised to 62, further painful adjustments would be needed before the end of this decade."

What is emerging in the experience of hundreds of millions of people around the world is the incompatibility of the capitalist system with their most basic needs. The growth of the class struggle is exposing bourgeois democracy as little more than a fig leaf for the dictatorship of the banks and corporations over economic and political life.

The political conclusions must be drawn. The fight for jobs, decent living standards, housing, education, health care and all other social rights is a political fight against the capitalist state. It is not a matter of pushing the state to the left, reforming it, or replacing one bourgeois government with another, but rather of replacing it, through the revolutionary mobilization of the working masses, with a workers' state, based on social ownership of the means of production and workers' democracy.

The fight for workers' power emerges organically and inevitably out of the struggles of the working class against the attacks by the bourgeoisie. It must be conducted consciously, in opposition to the trade unions, the official "left" parties and the various middle-class pseudo-left organizations, such as the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, that seek to keep the working class tied to the existing political setup and prevent it from mounting an independent struggle for power.

This fight is, moreover, an international struggle. Workers throughout Europe and around the world are facing the same attacks and fighting the same enemy. No matter how bitter the conflicts between the ruling elites of the various nations, they are united in seeking to impose the full cost of the crisis on the backs of the working class. International finance capital is carrying out a coordinated offensive against the workers. They must fight back by uniting their struggles across national borders and fighting for the program of world socialist revolution.

Barry Grey is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Friday, October 22, 2010

[Charlie Cray: Citizens United v. America's Citizens: A Voter's Guide](#)

Citizens United v. America's Citizens: A Voter's Guide

by Charlie Cray [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | CorpWatch | CommonDreams

The midterm elections are days away, but the winners are virtually certain: the corporations and conservative operatives like Karl Rove who have taken advantage of the [Supreme Court's Citizens United](#) (pdf) ruling to establish a well-heeled “shadow party” of networked trade associations and G.O.P. front groups.

Outspending Democratic-aligned groups by 7 to 1, these Republican-aligned groups have blitzed the nation's airwaves with wave after wave of ads. They have outlaid a staggering \$300 million plus -- five times as much on congressional elections as they did on the 2006 midterms, the October 4 [Washington Post](#) reported. And “they are more secretive than ever about where that money is coming from.”

Even without the flood of funds, Republicans were expected to capitalize in this year's midterm elections on widespread antipathy to congressional incumbents and progressives' disappointment with Pres. Barack Obama. But the groundswell of independent conservative groups – many with huge war chests for broadcast and cable attack ads – has some predicting a much larger Republican margin of victory.

A poll conducted by SurveyUSA, an independent research firm, found that a majority of voters think they have a right to know who is paying for the explosion of anonymous election ads. But this majority – despite believing that the nameless groups behind the “independent” ads don't have Americans' best interest in mind -- do not appear to be sufficiently outraged to spur structural reforms during the lame duck session that will follow the election. If Republicans retake the House, as most pollsters predict, other popular reforms such as public funding of elections will have little chance of passage. Thus it is likely that a key role in 2012 will continue to be played by corporate-funded front groups and, if recent charges are true, by foreign corporations and other interests alleged to be funneling campaign funds through the Chamber of Commerce and other groups.

The Citizens United Effect

The Supreme Court's 5-4 ruling in Citizens United v. FEC – widely acknowledged as a radical departure from precedent – defined corporate campaign spending as Constitutionally protected free speech. The Jan. 21, 2010 ruling opened the floodgates for corporations, unions, and non-profit front groups wishing to keep their funders anonymous and to spend unlimited funds on political ads.

The decision to extend First Amendment rights for corporations was a clear victory for “business civil liberties,” but the Court majority, recognizing that “transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions,” also advocated rapid and clear disclosure of political spending in the ruling. That stance rallied support for the [DISCLOSE Act](#), a [partial fix](#) that would make third-party groups name their funders. While the bill passed the House, it met united Republican opposition in the Senate, and [failed to pass](#) before the election recess.

The possible ramifications of disclosing controversial donations were made clear this summer in the wake of the Citizens United decision. A new Minnesota law mandating transparency forced Target (known for strong affirmative action policies) to disclose its \$150,000 contribution to a business group that was backing an anti-gay gubernatorial candidate. The company was “flashmobbed” by gay rights groups and other progressive coalitions led by MoveOn.org. Target’s CEO responded with a [quick apology](#) to employees and a pledge to set up a review process to screen future contributions.

Since the Citizens United decision shareholders and groups such as the Washington, DC-based non-partisan [Center for Political Accountability](#) have convinced a growing number of [companies](#) to disclose or otherwise improve their political spending policies. Yet judging by the rapid growth of conservative non-profits that keep their donors anonymous, it seems many wealthy individuals and corporate executives learned a different lesson from Target's PR embarrassment: Don’t get caught.

Coordination Is Key

There are now more than a dozen Republican-leaning nonprofit front groups and trade associations giving cover to corporations that want to influence this year’s elections by funding political ads. The groups have amassed a war chest estimated at more than \$300 million so far, enough to air more than 60,000 TV ads between August 1 and mid-October, according to Media Matters.

Although the web of associations among these groups is too dense to untangle completely, it is already clear that a powerful “shadow party” has emerged on the conservative right. It is poised to take credit for buying the midterm elections, and will presumably be a force to contend with in 2012.

Campaign reformers like Craig Holman of Public Citizen say that in addition to sharing office space and overlapping staff, the groups’ ability to collaborate is enhanced by weak FEC rules regarding coordination between the independent groups and campaigns. The Citizens United ruling is just one of a number of regulations and court decisions that effectively allow operatives like Karl Rove to raise and spend unprecedented amounts of money unrestrained by the restrictions that apply to party institutions such as the Republican National Committee.

“[The RNC is a mess, and has no money on hand](#),” Mary Cheney explained to CBS news, which reported that Rove and others chose instead to coordinate their efforts through the “Weaver Terrace Group,” named after Rove’s home address in Washington, DC, where it first met in April. Members include Gillespie, Law, Barbour, Coleman, and other Republican rainmakers, including Fred Malek.

The Weaver Terrace Group has reportedly been convening weekly at Crossroads’ offices. Although American Crossroads is not allowed to coordinate directly with campaigns, as the RNC can, its ability to monitor ad buys gives it fairly easy – albeit indirect -- organizational clout without breaking the FEC’s rules.

“They can use the same ad buyers,” says Public Citizen's Holman, which means the campaigns and the independent groups can coordinate through a third consultant.

Democracy 21’s Fred Wertheimer, the “dean of campaign reform,” agrees that none of this coordination would be possible if not for weak FEC rules and lax enforcement. Democracy 21 filed an IRS complaint alleging that American Crossroads has violated its tax status by operating primarily in support or against candidates for office. But no one – including Wertheimer -- expects the issue to be resolved for years.

Public Citizen and three other groups filed a complaint with the FEC on October 13, charging Crossroads GPS with violating FEC rules by registering as a nonprofit 501(c)4 organization without registering as a political committee. But if the complaint doesn’t die in a deadlocked vote among the FEC commissioners, it will also take years to resolve—and certainly not affect the November election.

“Un-American Corporations”

Everyone who has examined the numbers agrees that labor and groups like MoveOn.org cannot possibly match pro-Republican spending, especially with rich liberals like George Soros largely sitting out the midterms. Without its own phalanx of outside groups Democrats, including Obama, have countered by attacking the secrecy of the groups’ donors and using the organizer-in-chief to try to mobilize young voters.

Even revelations that foreign interests may be funding campaigns have failed to trigger a large enough backlash to have much impact on the election outcome. In early October the Center for American Progress reported that the Chamber of Commerce was taking money from foreign corporations and effectively commingling it with domestic corporate contributions for election campaign activities. After Obama and Vice President Joe Biden repeated the charge, the Chamber insisted that none of the cash it admits receiving from foreign-based corporations was going into its ad campaigns. Yet, without full disclosure, there’s no way of knowing if that assertion is true.

Meanwhile, as Democratic party allies are scrambling to cut their losses with a last-minute get-out-the-vote ground war, they are already strategizing about what to do if Republicans win big, as most predictions suggest. Blaming secretive financing by the Chamber, American Crossroads, and other groups, Democrats may mount another effort to pass the DISCLOSE Act during the upcoming lame duck session of Congress.

But campaign reformers say even the DISCLOSE Act won’t be enough, and many are planning to push for public funding of elections (embodied in the Fair Elections Now Act), along other reforms.

The Campaign Finance Institute’s Michael Malbin and others say that reformers need to take a step back and rethink their approach. "The key to a successful public financing program is to realize that it has to be about creating incentives for broader participation," Malbin wrote in *The American Interest*. Rather than futile attempts to "drive private money out of politics," the solution, Malbin argues, is to tilt the balance of power away from wealthy campaign financiers by giving rebates and tax credits for small contributions, and by using matching donations to give voters increased leverage.

Still others think that meaningful reform must rest on a constitutional amendment to restrict corporations from unlimited spending on elections. (SEE Box: Constitutional Amendment) But unless the political landscape shifts radically, it seems unlikely that an amendment has any chance of passage in the next Congress -- especially if Republicans maintain a united front against reform.

"The Citizens United decision is just one of a string of decisions vastly enhancing the power of corporations to run our economy, government and lives," says Holman. "Citizens attempting to take back their country will require vigilance and a willingness to pit ideas and activism against corporate money."

Karl Rove’s “Shadow Party”

Key organizations have attributed their sudden rise to the Citizens United decision. Among the [network of interlinked conservative political groups](#), the larger ones include:

* **60 Plus Association:** Formed by Jim Martin (“The Man Who Put the Death Tax on the Political Map”), a conservative operative associated with Richard Viguerie’s direct mail firm, 60 Plus bills itself as the “conservative alternative” to the AARP, amassing a \$4 million war chest that it intends to use to target nine House Democrats.

* **Alliance for America’s Future:** Former Vice President Dick Cheney’s daughter Mary Cheney formed the 501(c)4, which was [barred](#) from running ads in Nevada because it refused to register in the state. Cheney formed another group -- Send Harry Packing -- to pick up the slack. She also oversees the Partnership for America’s Future, a 527 group required to report its donors. Mary Cheney [told CBS News’ Political HotSheet](#) that she believes there should be “full and immediate disclosure” of all campaign-related donations. The Partnership’s only donor? The Alliance for America’s Future, which

doesn't have to reveal its own donors. The three groups together will spend \$12 to \$15 million this year, according to Cheney.

* **American Action Network and American Action Forum:** AAN's president is House GOP Whip Eric Cantor's former chief of staff. The group's corporate ties include Goldman Sachs, Wachovia, Home Depot, and several tobacco firms. Its board members include governors Haley Barbour, Jeb Bush, and Tom Ridge, plus various Republican ex-senators and congress members. Ex-senator Norm Coleman, who co-founded the group, explicitly [cited the Citizens United decision](#) as a reason for AAN's "greatly enhanced" fundraising. The group is running attack ads against Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI), and others. An ad against Feingold blames the senator for the country's \$9 trillion debt, an absurd claim given that the group's backers are largely veterans of the Bush-era policies that produced most of the nation's deficit. AAN leases space in its Washington office to American Crossroads.

* **American Crossroads and Crossroads GPS:** Karl Rove and former RNC chair Ed Gillespie formed the group in April, but quickly turned over day-to-day operations to Robert M. Duncan, a close Rove associate and a former RNC chair, along with Steven Law, a former general counsel to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and onetime chief of staff to Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY). Back in July [Rove was already crowing](#) on Fox News that, because of Citizens United, donors who had "maxed out" contributions to the RNC could now give more to American Crossroads or Crossroads GPS. American Crossroads was running attack ads against Harry Reid in Nevada even before Sharron Angle's (R-NV) campaign geared up. American Crossroads' [backers include](#) Bob J. Perry (\$7 million), a wealthy Texas homebuilder who backed the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth's attacks on John Kerry in 2004, Bradley Wayne Hughes (\$2.3 million), founder and chairman of Public Storage, and Joseph Craft (\$2 million) a Tulsa-based coal mine owner.

* **Americans for Job Security (AJS):** Founded in 1997 with help from the American Insurance Association and the American Forest and Paper Association, the group has no "purpose other than to cover various money trails all over the country," according to a [report by the Alaska Public Offices Commission](#) (pdf). The group openly praised the Citizens United decision as an "[unequivocal victory](#)." In September the New York Times [reported](#) that AJS spent \$6 million on ads during the primary season, concluding that its "deep ties" to Crossroads Media (a beltway Republican consulting operation also tied to Rove's American Crossroads) made it "[largely a funnel for anonymous donations](#)." [Public Citizen calls AJS](#) "one of the most egregious" violators of campaign finance laws.

* **Americans for New Leadership and Liberty.com:** Founded by Tea Party Activists Eric Odom and Yates Walker, the group has received strategic help from Republican activist Dick Morris. Walker, who is a consultant to Christine O'Donnell's campaign for Delaware's senate seat, told Politico that Citizens United "[paved the way for the group's formation](#)." He added that Liberty.com intends to "be a player for a long time," evolving into the "right-wing version of MoveOn.org."

* **Americans for Prosperity (AfP):** Chaired by billionaire right-wing industrialist David Koch, AfP's president, Tim Phillips, is an associate of Ralph Reed, a lobbyist for Fortune 100 corporations, and the architect of various Astroturf campaigns. AfP played a key role in funding the Tea Party movement, and has 31 state-level operations. The group has fired off a variety of dubious propaganda salvos, including ads that blame the Obama administration's stimulus plan for rising unemployment. A memo [recently leaked](#) to ThinkProgress.org reveals that Koch and a variety of corporate "investors" in the Republican Party met in June with Republican strategists, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Glenn Beck, and other conservatives to plot election strategy.

* **American Future Fund:** Formed by Iowa Republican operatives, the group expects to spend nearly \$25 million on ads this year.

* **Commission on Hope, Growth and Opportunity:** Created by William B. Canfield, a Republican lawyer specializing in election law, the group expects to raise \$25 million to help two dozen GOP candidates. Scott Reed, a veteran GOP operative who ran former Sen. Bob Dole's (R-KS) 1996 presidential campaign, helped launch the 501(c)4. [Reed told](#) the Center for Public Integrity's Peter Stone that "Citizens United opened the door for the unparalleled participation by corporations at the financial level."

* **Revere America:** Founded by ex-Gov. George Pataki (R-NY), this 501(c)4 was formed to repeal the health care bill. It has spent well over \$1 million in New York and New Hampshire races.

* **The Club for Growth:** Founded in 1999 by conservative economist Steve Moore and the Cato Institute's Ed Crane, the group set up "Club for Growth Action." After the Citizens United ruling, the independent expenditure committee announced that it would accept "unlimited individual and corporate contributions," and aims to spend \$24 million on this year's election. The club's former president, Pat Toomey, is running for Senate in Pennsylvania, and CfG is backing him in many ways.

* **The First Amendment Alliance:** A 527 "Super PAC" that People for the American Way reports is "[a sham group for the energy industry whose office is a mailbox](#)." The group's ads have been so misleading that one TV station pulled an ad targeting Jack Conway of Kentucky. Another energy-backed group is the **Business Industry Political Action Committee (BIPAC)**, which receives funding from the American Petroleum Institute, ExxonMobil, and other oil, mining, and gas interests. BIPAC is expected to spend \$6 million this year, and aims primarily to influence how the employees of its 400 member companies vote.

* **U.S. Chamber of Commerce:** According to [U.S. Chamber Watch](#) (a project of the Change to Win labor federation), the Chamber is the nation's most powerful lobbying juggernaut, spending over \$144 million in 2009 and using its "borderline thuggish" lobbying tactics (as one congressional aide described them to The Hill), to kill a variety of reforms, including the DISCLOSE Act. After Citizens United, Chamber President Tom Donahue opened the group's doors to any member company that wanted to pay for anonymous attack ads. In October, U.S. Chamber Watch filed an IRS complaint charging the Chamber with illegally laundering more than \$18 million from insurance giant AIG's charitable foundation (run by former AIG CEO Hank Greenberg) through the Chamber's political coffers.

(For more details about these and other groups see People for the American Way, "[After Citizens United: A Look into the Pro-Corporate Players in American Politics](#)")

Constitutional Amendment to Restrict Corporations

Many reformers remain convinced that the only way to fully address the problems created by the Citizens United decision is to pass a constitutional amendment restricting corporate participation in electoral politics. At least two coalitions, [FreeSpeechforPeople.org](#) and [MovetoAmend.org](#), have formed to support an amendment, which is gathering broad support:

* Various members of Congress have endorsed the idea, including representatives Donna Edwards (D-MD), chair of the House Judiciary Committee John Conyers (D-MI), and senators Baucus, Dodd, Udall, Bennet and Specter.

* The vast majority of voters of all political affiliations are more likely to support candidates who favor a Constitutional amendment limiting corporate spending, according to a June poll for PFAW conducted by Hart Research Associates.

* A bipartisan group of more than 50 constitutional scholars and prominent attorneys – including former Massachusetts Attorney General Frank Bellotti and six other former state attorneys general-- recently issued a statement with the support of Voter Action and Free Speech for People urging Congress to consider a Constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision.

* In August, the National Baptist Convention passed a resolution calling for a constitutional amendment to overturn the Citizens United ruling.

Charlie Cray is a senior member of [Greenpeace USA](#)'s research unit. He is also director of the [Center for Corporate Policy](#) and co-author of "[The People's Business: Controlling Corporations and Restoring Democracy](#)."

CorpWatch [home page](#)

CommonDreams [home page](#)

Chamber of Commerce Receiving Millions From U.S. Corporations to Support Conservative Agenda

by Lauren Kelley [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | AlterNet

AlterNet [home page](#)

The "Legal" Money Laundering Operation Conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

By Dave Lefcourt [article link](#)

October 22, 2010 | OpEdNews

OpEdNews [home page](#)

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:39 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Thursday, October 21, 2010

[Let Us Finally Gift The Life That Was Gifted To Us !!](#)

The occupation of America (the public-Nation) by the United States (the private-State) MUST END - this applies to Canada as well, essentially the 51st State (has been for decades), and Britain; ALL ARE SIMILARLY OCCUPIED AND OWNED, the Anglo-American Brotherhood goes back millennia. **WE MUST RESIST: ** OUR ONLY WEAPON IS OUR REFUSAL !!** ** Violence must be avoided at all cost, the Corporate behave as beasts, we must not. Partisanship is used by those wholly corporate as it is an instrumentality of it. **A blend of Rwandan-Serbian "Tea" steeped in hate and violence will only serve corporate interests and increase our suppression and enslavement. Those who incite violence must be indicted; if death results they must be charged with inciting Genocide. An invective firestorm can only result in harm and they know it - DO NOT BE USED BY THEM !!**

We are the VALUE of the currency. The CORPORATE hold the threat of physical force over us, but we hold the the ultimate power over them, the VALUE of their riches, without us they are less than paupers. **We must take back our value and employ it for ourselves, together !! Disinvest from the Corporate, repudiate their debt and Government and invest in community. Withdraw all support and use of Federal Reserve Notes (FRN's) and associate currencies (CDN Dollar / Pound / EURO), demand employment of public monies !! Protect your neighbors from predatory banks: surround their homes and resist repossession (without violence) !! Withdraw all monies from any bank who will repossess any home !! POLICE AND MILITARY, WE ARE YOUR BROTHERS, SISTERS, SONS, DAUGHTERS, AUNTS, UNCLES, MOTHERS AND FATHERS: YOU ARE US, WE ARE YOU - STAND WITH US NOT THE CORPORATE: YOU ARE FAMILY, THEY ARE NOT (all of us are considered chattel by them - they "disowned" us as family a long time ago in order to "own" us as slaves) !! WHEN OUR RIGHTS ARE SUPPRESSED AND TRAMPLED ON SO ARE YOURS - PLEASE DO NOT PUT YOUR SOLES ON OUR SOULS !!**

Our Nations are about to collapse, their artificial supports have rotted away, have crumbled, have been hammered by willful intent, neglect and greed !! If we do not step in and assume responsibility for our safety and security we will surely perish. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR FAMILIES AND TO OURSELVES: OUR FUTURE IS OURS OR THERE WILL BE NO FUTURE !! "DO NO HARM, CAUSE NO LOSS" MUST BE REMADE AS THE COMMON LAW OF THE LAND !! **The Spiritual Illness that possesses us, that occupies every facet of our lives must be cured.** It is Mammon, the false-god of the Corporate. **It is cured by out-going concern, forgiveness and unselfish love** - well-being and salvation is the result - a gift from God (no matter your definition): if the "result" is unselfish love (giving not taking) then it is the truth - all else is error. **A society of the "gift" gives life, a society of the "take" takes life. LET US FINALLY GIFT THE LIFE THAT WAS GIFTED TO US, IT IS OURS TO GIVE !!**

Note: Previously posted on April 03, 2010 and May 14, 2010

Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:29 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Ted Rall: Ban Foreclosures Now

Too Pig to Jail? Ban Foreclosures Now

by Ted Rall [article link](#)

October 21, 2010 | CommonDreams

SAN FRANCISCO--What would happen to you if you got caught forging a mortgage application? You'd go to jail. And rightly so.

In one case in Florida, an employee of GMAC Mortgage admitted under oath that he personally forged 10,000 foreclosure affidavits. This low-level schlub is the tip of the tip of a massive iceberg, one of countless "robo-signers" whom voracious banks including GMAC, Bank of America, Citibank and JPMorganChase hired in order to kick American families out of their homes as quickly as possible.

Ignoring state banking laws, which require bank officers to review each foreclosure document to make sure all the facts are correct, banks instead hired low-wage "Burger King kids," as B of A execs called them, to sign thousands of foreclosures they never looked at. Many were signed under someone else's name.

Hundreds of thousands of foreclosures--maybe millions--were processed illegally by these huge banks gone wild. "Behind the question of improper foreclosure documentation lies a more important issue of whether lenders even have legal standing to foreclose because they lack the original mortgage note as required by law," reports The New York Times.

One guy got evicted from his house in Florida despite the fact that his mortgage had been completely paid off years earlier. Thousands of people who purchased illegally foreclosed properties may not have legal title.

Prosecutors in Ohio, Florida and at least 20 other states are investigating one of the biggest acts of wholesale fraud in the history of American business.

When the scandal broke on October 8th the banks declared a temporary moratorium on foreclosures. Two weeks later, they declared the whole fuss a simple matter of paperwork and resumed their happy work of reducing millions of jobless Americans to homelessness.

"There is not a single case where a foreclosure was made in error," said Bank of America spokesman Dan Frahm (if that's his real name). "The facts supporting the foreclosures are correct."

Bank of America plans to evict 102,000 families next month alone.

Adam Levitin, an associate law professor at Georgetown University, expressed doubt that the same banks that effectively rejected 99 percent of loan-modification applications by intentionally "losing" paperwork had suddenly become efficient. "The banks have dragged their feet and taken forever to do loan modifications, yet within less than two weeks they have managed to review hundreds of thousands of foreclosure cases," he said. "It is simply not credible."

"These are banks going to court and committing fraud," said Ira Rheingold of the National Association of Consumer Advocates. "For them to say this is a minor technical problem is mind-boggling."

Meanwhile, Florida officials are looking into charges that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac foreclosed on 70,000 homes in the state during 2009 using forged court documents.

Enough is enough.

It is time to stop foreclosures.

Not for a few weeks. Not temporarily.

Forever.

Foreclosure has always been terrible for America. It's bad enough to fall on hard times, whether it's due to a medical catastrophe or a job loss. Getting kicked out of your house forces you to couch-surf or camp outside, struggling to survive day to day. This makes it even harder to get back on your feet.

Foreclosures penalize spouses and innocent children. And, as studies have shown, shuttered houses reduce property values in the surrounding neighborhood.

At this writing millions of American families are in default on their mortgages. It's only going to get worse. The real unemployment rate is over 20 percent and rising. The global economy is still tanking. And the Obama Administration hasn't even bothered to propose a single jobs program. If this keeps up, we'll all be living outside while our empty former homes fall apart.

Flint, Michigan: America's glorious future?

It's not as though banks don't have other ways to induce people to meet their monthly nut. If you default, they can trash your credit rating. Good luck getting another mortgage later.

Even if you don't care about common decency or social stability, consider the cause of justice: The banks are criminal enterprises. Their executives are gangsters who think nothing of charging 40 percent interest on credit cards and lines of credit.

The banks don't deserve to get "their" houses back through foreclosure. (We don't even know if they're "their" houses.)

Don't look to Obama or the Democrats for help. They work for the banks. We need neighborhoods to form mutual-defense organizations. When a family gets evicted, everyone should help them move their stuff back in and guard the house to keep out the fraud-happy banksters and their rent-a-cops.

What of the banks? These corporate maniacs should be treated as harshly as the individuals they pretend to be for the purpose of buying campaign ads. What they've done is the equivalent of robbing a million convenience stores.

Lock them in prison. Throw away the key. And seize their property. Shut them down. Or, if they're "too big to fail," rescue them--through nationalization.

A nationalized bank might still do evil things. But their profits would belong to us--not corporate criminals.

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Ted Rall is the author of the new political call to arms, "[The Anti-American Manifesto](#)." His website is tedrall.com.

CommonDreams [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:23 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Burghart / Zeskind: Tea Party Nationalism

Tea Party organizations have given platforms to anti-Semites, racists, and bigots. Further, hard-core white nationalists have been attracted to these protests, looking for potential recruits and hoping to push these (white) protesters towards a more self-conscious and ideological white supremacy.

Tea Party Nationalism

Introduction

Written by D. Burghart & L. Zeskind [article link](#)

August 24, 2010

Tea Party Nationalism is the first report of its kind. It examines the six national organizational networks at the core of the Tea Party movement: FreedomWorks Tea Party, 1776 Tea Party, Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Patriots, ResistNet, and Tea Party Express. This report documents the corporate structures and leaderships, their finances, and membership concentrations of each faction. It looks at the actual relationships of these factions to each other, including some of the very explicit differences they have with each other. And we begin an analysis of the larger politics that motivate each faction and the Tea Party movement generally.

The result of this study contravenes many of the Tea Parties' self-invented myths, particularly their supposedly sole concentration on budget deficits, taxes and the power of the federal government. Instead, this report found Tea Party ranks to be permeated with concerns about race and national identity and other so-called social issues. In these ranks, an abiding obsession with Barack Obama's birth certificate is often a stand-in for the belief that the first black president of the United States is not a "real American." Rather than strict adherence to the Constitution, many Tea Partiers are challenging the provision for birthright citizenship found in the Fourteenth Amendment.

One temperature gauge of these events is the fact that longtime national socialist David Duke is hoping to find enough money and support in the Tea Party ranks to launch yet another electoral campaign in the 2012 Republican primaries.

The leading figures in one national faction, 1776 Tea Party (the faction more commonly known as TeaParty.org), were imported directly from the anti-immigrant vigilante organization, the Minuteman Project. Tea Party Nation has provided a gathering place for so-called birthers and has attracted Christian nationalists and nativists. Tea Party Express so outraged the public with the racist pronouncements of its leaders, that other national factions have (recently) eschewed any ties to it. Both ResistNet and Tea Party Patriots, the two largest networks, harbor long-time anti-immigrant nativists and racists; and Tea Party Patriots has opened its doors to those aiming at repeal of the Seventeenth Amendment and the direct election of United State Senators.

While Tea Partiers and their supporters are concerned about the current economic recession and the increased government debt spending it has occasioned, there is no observable statistical link between Tea Party membership and unemployment levels. Readers will note a regression analysis on this question done last January specifically for this report. And their storied opposition to political and social elites turns out to be predicated on an antagonism to federal assistance to those deemed the "undeserving poor."

The Tea Party movement as a whole is a multi-million dollar complex that includes for-profit corporations, non-party non-profit organizations, and political action committees. Collectively they have erased the advantage that Democrats once enjoyed in the arena of internet fundraising and web-based mobilization. They have resuscitated the ultra-conservative wing of American political life, created a stiff pole of opinion within Republican Party ranks, and they have had a devastating impact on thoughtful policy making for the common good, both at the local and state as well as at the federal levels.

A quick look at the Tea Party Caucus in Congress, led by Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN), reveals a significant level of overlap with the enforcement-only House Immigration Reform Caucus led by Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA). More, a number of these caucus members are also sponsors of a bill sitting in committee that would end birthright citizenship, H.R. 1868.

The Tea Party movement has unleashed a still inchoate political movement by angry middle class (overwhelmingly) white people who believe their country, their nation, has been taken from them. And they want it back.

The oft-repeated Tea Party call to “Take it Back, Take Your Country Back” is an explicitly nationalist refrain. It is sometimes coupled with the assertion that there are “real Americans,” as opposed to others who they believe are driving the country into a socialist ditch.

The Tea Party phenomenon exists at about three levels of agreement and commitment. Several national opinion polls point to support for the Tea Parties running at approximately 16% to 18% of the adult population, which would put the number of sympathizers in the tens of millions. That would be the outermost ring of support. At the next level is a larger less defined group of a couple of million activists who go to meetings, buy the literature and attend the many local and national protests. At the core is the more 250,000 members in all fifty states who have signed up on the websites of the six national organizational networks that form the core of this movement. Tea Party Nationalism focuses on this core of the movement.

It would be a mistake to claim that all Tea Partiers are nativist vigilantes or racists of one stripe or another, and this report manifestly does not make that claim. As this report highlights, all of the national Tea Party factions have had problems in these areas. However, of the national factions, only FreedomWorks Tea Party, headquartered in the Washington, D.C. area, has made an explicit attempt to narrow the focus of the movement as a whole to fiscal issues--an effort that has largely failed, as this report documents.

Nevertheless, the impact of President Barack Obama’s election, and the fact that the First Family of the United States has ancestors who were once the property of white people, has had an effect. It is not direct and mechanical, like a cue ball hitting the nine ball into the corner pocket. But it is identifiable nonetheless. Consider, for example, the incessant depiction of President Obama as a non-American. This theme began among those who regard him as a non-native born American who should not rightly (constitutionally) hold the presidency. The permutations go on from there: Islamic terrorist, socialist, African witch doctor, lying African, etc. If he is not properly American, then he becomes the “other” that is not “us.” Five of the six national factions have these “birthers” in their leadership; the only exception being FreedomWorks.

A look at the graph counting Tea Party numbers over time shows that the organizations are continuing to grow. The different factions are not all growing at the same rate, however. The Tea Party Patriots and ResistNet, the two national factions with the most diffuse, locally-based organizational structures, are experiencing the fastest rate of growth. This would tend to indicate a larger movement less susceptible to central control, and more likely to attract racist and nativist elements at the local level. Simply put, the Tea Parties are not going away after the mid-term elections, and they can be expected to have a continuing impact on public policy debate into the future. It should not be expected, however, for the Tea Party movement to have the same organizational configurations for the indefinite future. At a minimum, some sorting out process is likely to occur--including a major segment of Tea partiers who move in to the Republican Party apparatus, while others shift closer to the white nationalist movement.

The contemporary white nationalist movement was created in the 1990s, as a realignment of forces brought the Klan-national socialist dominated white supremacist movement together with elements formerly associated with Buchanan-style conservatism. This type of nationalism is akin to the ethnic nationalism of the post-Soviet era in Yugoslavia, and differs significantly from the post-World War Two anti-colonial national liberation movements in southern Africa and elsewhere.

In this instance, "scientific" racists, America first isolationists, anti-immigrant nativists seeking to maintain a white demographic majority, neo-Confederates, and a strain of so-called paleo-conservatives melded with Holocaust deniers, Posse Comitatus-style militia groups, Aryanists, white power skinheads, and white citizen council-types to create a single if not seamless white nationalist movement. These are all self-conscious racist ideologues, as opposed to those who exhibit unconscious racist attitudes. While this movement's goals are often divided between those who want to carve a whites-only republic out of the United States and those who work for a return to the pre-Brown decision, pre-civil right legislation era,

one and all seek the establishment of total and unquestioned white domination. Toward these ends, the white nationalist movement is divided between two strategic orientations: the go-it-alone vanguardists, and the mainstreamers who seek to win a majority following among white people. It is decidedly the mainstreamers, such as the Council of Conservative Citizens discussed in this report, who seek to influence and recruit among the Tea Partiers.

Similarly, it is the more mainstream-oriented militias that most interact with Tea Party organizations. Militias are organizations of men and women with weapons, who create a command structure based on rank, and often engage in paramilitary training with the presumption that they will fight an enemy to be named later. For justification, they search in the Second Amendment, as well as in the ideas of the 1980s-era Posse Comitatus. That Posse Comitatus based itself on the arcane doctrine of a "sovereign" form of citizenship for white Christians, with rights and responsibilities that are presumed to be superior to that of those who they call Fourteenth Amendment citizens--all non-Christians and people of color. The Posse's form of "state" citizenship predates the "national" citizenship of the Fourteenth Amendment, and it is this state citizenship, coupled with the Second Amendment, that creates their justification for militias. Otherwise these groups might otherwise be regarded simply as private armies. As noted in this report, there are several militias that regard themselves as Tea Party organizations.

A word about Tea Party nationalism qua nationalism. Despite the fact that Tea Partiers sometimes dress in the costumes of 18th century Americans, wave the Gadsden flag and claim that the United States Constitution should be the divining rod of all legislative policies, theirs is an American nationalism that does not always include all Americans. It is a nationalism that excludes those deemed not to be "real Americans;" including the native-born children of undocumented immigrants (often despised as "anchor babies"), socialists, Moslems, and those not deemed to fit within a "Christian nation." The "common welfare" of the constitution's preamble does not complicate their ideas about individual liberty. This form of nationalism harkens back to the America first ideology of Father Coughlin. As the Confederate battle flags, witch doctor caricatures and demeaning discourse suggest, a bright white line of racism threads through this nationalism. Yet, it is not a full-fledged variety of white nationalism. It is as inchoate as it is super-patriotic. It is possibly an embryo of what it might yet become.

In this report, please note the maps. Each traces the geographic location of the members, the relative size of each one of the locations, and provides a stunningly graphic overview of the size and scope of the Tea Party organizations.

This provides the most accurate assessment to date of where each of the faction's strength lies, and when combined with other data not included in this report could help future analysts gather information about the Tea Parties' potential electoral impact.

All of the local groups that are not affiliated with one national network or the other are outside the scope of this report. They await further examination and analysis in the future. Similarly beyond the reach of this report are the many ancillary organizations that have contributed to the movement since its inception, including: Ron Paul's Campaign for Liberty, Americans for Prosperity, National Precinct Alliance and the John Birch Society. Also not included in this report was an analysis of the various national 9-12 groups. The 9-12 formations lack the same sort of national structure present in the Tea Party movement. The national 9-12 formations are important peripheral forces, but as organizational actors they do not appear to play a notable role in the internal movement infrastructure. Moreover, much of the 9-12 group momentum was co-opted by the Tea Party movement. Following the 9-12 rally in 2009 in Washington, D.C., many local 9-12 Project groups hitched up with one or more of the national Tea Party factions.

A note about the methodology and techniques used to gather the data for this report.[1] During the past twelve months, we've employed a variety of investigative reporting techniques to study the Tea Parties to keep up with the expanding and ever-changing dynamic of the movement.

The authors of this report read through the Tea Party literature—from movement produced books like The Official Tea Party Handbook and Taking America Back One Tea Party at a Time, to electronic publications including emails, electronic newsletters, articles, blog posts, and tweets written by Tea Partiers. We also watched many hours of online video of Tea Partier and Tea Party events. For firsthand accounts, IREHR staff and volunteers attended Tea Party rallies, conventions, and meetings from Washington DC to Washington State. We also talked with numerous Tea Party activists.

To follow the money, the authors dug through government documents and databases, including corporate filings, IRS forms, court cases, campaign finance reports, and unemployment statistics. We utilized computer-assisted reporting to collect additional data and help make sense of it all.

The authors of this report also did a thorough scan of secondary sources, including the exceptional reporting that has already been done on the Tea Parties. We also analyzed the considerable amount of polling that's been done on the Tea Parties.

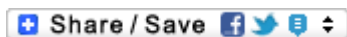
It was IREHR's goal to provide new data and analysis and to add something of use and value to the growing literature on the Tea Party movement. Upon reflection, we think the following pages do just that.

Tea Party Nationalism [home page](#)
Tea Party Nationalism [report page](#)
Tea Party Nationalism [download report](#) (pdf)

Democracy NOW!
NAACP Report Ties Tea Party to Militia and Racist Groups
October 20, 2010

Less than two weeks before the midterms elections, the NAACP has published a new report that exposes what is calls links between various Tea Party organizations and racist hate groups in the United States. The report, Tea Party Nationalism, analyzes each of the six most active Tea Party organizations in the country and describes links between Tea Party factions and various white supremacist groups, anti-immigrant organizations and militias. We speak with Benjamin Todd Jealous, the president and CEO of the NAACP; and one of the authors of the report, Leonard Zeskind, the president of the Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights.

Democracy NOW! NAACP [report page](#)
Democracy NOW! [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:54 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Szandor Blestman: Thinking, It's not For Humans Anymore

Thinking, It's not For Humans Anymore
by Szandor Blestman [article link](#) [article link](#)
October 19, 2010 | Szandor Blestman | Silver Bear Cafe

It doesn't matter what I think. Really. If it did, we'd all be living free right now. We'd all have domain over our bodies and minds. We wouldn't be paying taxes. We wouldn't be worried about the penalties for questioning the authority of strangers who claim to represent our interests. We'd be able to put into our bodies what we want, for we would have self ownership and we'd be able to associate with who we want for they would also have self ownership. We wouldn't have to worry about government spies poking about trying to determine our political, religious, or philosophical beliefs. We wouldn't have to be dependent upon government agencies who have failed and proven to be incompetent and corrupt time and again.

If you're reading this than it's more than likely it doesn't matter what you think either. You're likely part of the 99.99% of the world's population that isn't supposed to think. At least, that's the impression I get these days. It seems to me that more and more the government wants control. It seems that it only matters, at least when it comes to economic policy, what a very few elite at the top think.

This was more than evident when it came to the bailouts. Our supposed representatives admitted that they had massive calls opposing the bank bailouts. I heard at least one case of 300 to 1 against. Yet somehow this massively unpopular legislation went through. What happened to democracy? Our government makes these grandiose claims that they are protecting democracy and bringing it to the poor of the world, yet they won't even exercise it in their own legislation.

It was apparent that it doesn't matter what you think when it came to the recent healthcare legislation. The democrats had a majority control in both the house and senate and their man was sitting in the White House. They were determined to ram it through. Despite the battles, despite the animated protests, despite the boisterous confrontations at town hall meetings, the democrats decided that what they thought was more important than what you thought (unless you agreed with them) and they decided to cram that legislative tome down the throats of the American people.

It's most recently apparent by remarks made by Eric Holder that they couldn't care less what the people in California think. If proposition 19 passes, he promises to crack down on marijuana in California. Democracy doesn't seem to matter to Mr. Holder. Doing what is right and allowing people to decide for themselves what products of nature they want to consume doesn't matter to Mr. Holder. What you think doesn't matter to Mr. Holder. All that matters is what Mr. Holder thinks. All that matters is his attempt to maintain his power. All that matters is that he has command of an army enforcers who let him do their thinking for them. That situation, to me, is the most telling of them all, for it shows without a doubt how frightened they are of people thinking for themselves.

What this situation demonstrates, at least in my eyes, is a deeper problem with the system. The elite at the top have control, and they don't care what you or I or anyone else thinks. They don't care how you feel. They simply don't give two poops in a handbag about you or anyone else who isn't running in their inner circles. The elites are going to do what the elites want to do, and yet they can't. You see, they do know that we outnumber them by about a million to one or so. They know that if we figure that out then we are likely to realize just how much power we really have. They are frightened because they don't want to give up what they believe is theirs.

While it might not matter what you or I think as individuals, it does start to matter if enough people start to think in certain ways. That's why those at the top want to control what you and I think. That's why they want to hide or misrepresent certain information. That's why they want to control the school system and what the children learn. That's why they want to control the media and the news you see. That's why they want to censor the Internet, where the dissidents dwell. The elite don't want you to see reality, they want you to see the reality they present. They want you to believe in their collectivist system, to think in their collectivist terms, so that they can enslave your collectivist minds and snuff out any notion of the importance of the individual.

The elite don't want anyone thinking. The less the masses think, the greater control they can have over them. They pay people big bucks to do the thinking that matters, and they pay them to think of ways to maintain control. But their system seems to be falling apart right before our eyes. As the base of the pyramid awakens, the foundations shake. Those at the top have the farthest to fall, but a pyramid is a pretty solid structure. They likely plan on landing on another part of the pyramid and building another foundation.

It's time to think about who's at the top of the heap. It's time to recognize the power structure and realize who's pulling the strings. It's time to put some thought into where all this is heading and to let those at the top know that we are thinking, and that our thoughts do matter. The super rich have taken us at the bottom of the pyramid for a ride. Not the wealthy, not the upper middle class, not the small business man who has made good, but the super rich. The owners of the central banks. Those in control of the mega global corporations. The too big to fail. They are the ones pulling the strings of governments worldwide. They are the ones who have led us into the current mess we find ourselves in. They are the ones who need to relinquish control so that we can all work individually to get us out of it.

It's time to start moving toward a place where it does matter what you think. It's time to move in a different direction. It's time to take back the power of the individual and use it for the betterment of society. This can be done in many ways, but it can start by paring down the federal government. It can start by letting them know that we will hold them accountable. It can start by demanding in no uncertain terms that they obey the laws written to restrain their power, that they follow the Constitution that they take an oath to uphold and stop trying to create a centralized, fascistic style corporate state. They

need to leave us alone, to let us make the decisions about where we spend the money we earn, and stop trying to establish a world empire run by a corporate elite.

Voting for the lesser of two evils is no longer enough. We need better mechanism to hold those in office accountable. We need a fairer justice system where those who have been given the public trust are actually punished if they misuse that trust or become corrupt. We need to start taking back our local politics, to start speaking out against unjust laws, and to allow more competition and choice when it comes to services that have been monopolized for far too long by government agencies. We need to create a system where honest hard work is rewarded, putting a dollar into savings is meaningful, and private property is honored. These are the principles for which this nation was built, and they are the principles that have been forgotten and discarded by the ruling elite who want to do the thinking for everyone else. It may be a long, hard journey, but it is one that is possible providing we all just put some thought into it.

My archived articles are available at szandorblestman.com. Please visit there to help support me and my efforts. I also have an ebook available entitled "[The Ouijiers](#)" by Matthew Wayne.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:27 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Tuesday, October 19, 2010

[Carmen Yarrusso: A Peaceful, People's Revolution](#)

Why a peaceful, people's revolution is the only way to take back our government

By Carmen Yarrusso [article link](#)

October 19, 2010 | OpEdNews

In God-blest America, the land of the free, our founding fathers' sacred idea of a government "of the people, by the people, for the people" has become but a cruel joke--along with that "godamned piece of paper" we call our Constitution.

Our political system is *openly* rigged against the best interests of the American people. A massive market mechanism is securely entrenched in our political system where political influence is *openly* bought and sold. Tens of thousands of highly-paid middlemen called "lobbyists" facilitate the legal transfer of millions between moneyed special interests and our so-called "representatives" in Congress.

This very lucrative business of buying and selling political influence (which wouldn't be very lucrative if it didn't produce very lucrative results) has become the driving engine of our government. Our so-called "representatives" in Congress vie for millions in legal bribes in return for delivering billions of our tax dollars to moneyed special interests. It's pure folly to think our current political system could possibly look out for the best interests of the American people.

Looking back ten years

Just ponder what our government has done to us (not for us) in the last ten years alone. It's utterly mind boggling. The best interests of the American people have been sacrificed to moneyed special interests time and time again. But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

The banking industries paid millions in bribes for a legal license to steal billions from the American people. When greed got them in trouble, our so-called "representatives" gave them billions more of our money. But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

After the health insurance industry paid its bribes, our so-called "representatives" refused to even consider single-payer (despite its proven track record of providing cheaper, superior health care, and providing it to *all* citizens). Instead, millions of Americans will continue to suffer (or go bankrupt or die) for lack of health insurance. If a policy would significantly reduce the profits of moneyed special interests, it's simply designated "off the table" by our so-called "representatives". But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

In the last ten years, our so-called "representatives" shared nearly a billion in bribes from the "defense" industry. In return, they doubled our defense budget to \$700 billion (equal to all other countries combined!) and lied us into unnecessary, endless, expanding wars that will ultimately cost us trillions (aside from the extreme human costs).

Our so-called "representatives" are cutting social spending just when the American people need it most. Yet they continue to spend hundreds of billions on weapons of mass destruction to "protect us" from our enemies. But most of our "enemies" are *purposely* created by our government's blatantly unjust foreign policies (that openly support regimes that oppress millions of human beings) and by our violent military occupations of their homelands. Without a perpetual supply of "enemies", "defense" industry profits would plummet.

If that weren't enough, our so-called "representatives" have worked hard to keep America the number one weapons merchant on earth. Our so-called "representatives" continue to support the sale of billions in weapons to oppressive regimes around the world, which creates still more "enemies", which creates more special interests profits, etc. But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

All these outrageous government actions are exactly what we should expect from a government *openly* for sale to the highest bidder. Moneyed special interests paid for these outrageous government actions, and they got what they paid for. We, the people, got screwed.

We, the people, are just government-controlled fodder for moneyed special interests. But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

Real change is impossible under our current political system

Our current political system *guarantees* our so-called "representatives" will continue to pass and sustain legislation that transfers billions of our hard-earned tax dollars to moneyed special interests. Why "*guarantees*"? Because members of Congress who oppose moneyed special interests are promptly punished, ostracized, or replaced (if their offense is great enough). For example, dare to oppose the AIPAC and your days in Congress are numbered.

Further, our current political system *guarantees* both moneyed special interests and our so-called "representatives" *must* participate in this influence-peddling scam against the American people (because they'd be stupid not to). Big corporations would be at a competitive disadvantage (and would cheat their shareholders) if they refused to buy political influence. Likewise, our so-called "representatives" would be at a competitive disadvantage getting elected or staying in office if they refused to sell political influence. But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

The upcoming midterm elections are merely melodrama for the masses. Our "choices" have all been pre-chosen for us by moneyed special interests pumping millions into the process. Besides, whoever wins will be forced to play by established political rules that guarantee moneyed special interests will always come ahead of the American people's best interests.

For weeks before the elections, the lackey mainstream media (using colorful pundits) entertain us with political melodrama. They arouse us by pitting one segment of the American people against another. They make millions bombarding us with empty, emotional, 30-second TV ads that are little more than name-calling or patriotic platitudes.

Congressional elections are sheep fighting among themselves for their favorite pre-chosen wolves. Congressional elections merely determine which segment of the American people gets screwed by which moneyed special interests group. But that's exactly how our current political system is designed to work.

The Catch-22 of taking back our government

Trying to reform our current political system using that very same corrupt system is just futile folly. It's like trying to fix your broken arms using your broken arms. Our current political system is designed to be reform proof. It has well-established mechanisms to protect and maintain the status quo. That's why "campaign finance reform" and all other such efforts to "reform" our current political system from within are doomed to either fail outright or be so watered-down as to be useless.

rev-o-lu-tion (Dictionary.com)

noun

1. *an overthrow or repudiation and the thorough replacement of an established government or political system by the people governed.*

Congressional elections are just rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic. We can't vote our government back to us. A peaceful, people's *revolution* is the *only* way we can take back our government. The multibillion dollar business of buying and selling political influence (currently the driving engine of our government) must be overthrown, repudiated and thoroughly replaced if democracy is to survive in America .

This massive influence-peddling scam must become our number one political issue because it underlies and thus greatly affects all other issues. If we don't get big money out of our politics, our democracy and our well-being will continue to decline and surely we'll take the rest of the world down with us.

We can't afford to sit by like sheep meekly waiting for slaughter. We must find ways to hinder and harass the corporate state at every turn. Nothing will change unless we, the people, begin to organize radical acts of civil disobedience to disrupt our current political system, upping the ante until this massive influence-peddling scam is thoroughly exposed and eliminated.

We, the people, must take back our government by peaceful revolution because it will never be given back voluntarily.

"Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." John F. Kennedy

Carmen Yarrusso lives on a river in a small town in New Hampshire. He often writes about uncomfortable truths.

OpEdNews [articles](#) by Carmen Yarrusso

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:50 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Robert Reich: The Perfect Storm

The Perfect Storm

by Robert Reich [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 19, 2010 | Robert Reich | CommonDreams

It's a perfect storm. And I'm not talking about the impending dangers facing Democrats. I'm talking about the dangers facing our democracy.

First, income in America is now more concentrated in fewer hands than it's been in 80 years. Almost a quarter of total income generated in the United States is going to the top 1 percent of Americans.

The top one-tenth of one percent of Americans now earn as much as the bottom 120 million of us.

Who are these people? With the exception of a few entrepreneurs like Bill Gates, they're top executives of big corporations and Wall Street, hedge-fund managers, and private equity managers. They include the Koch brothers, whose wealth increased by billions last year, and who are now funding tea party candidates across the nation.

Which gets us to the second part of the perfect storm. A relatively few Americans are buying our democracy as never before. And they're doing it completely in secret.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are pouring into advertisements for and against candidates — without a trace of where the dollars are coming from. They're laundered through a handful of groups. Fred Maleck, whom you may remember as deputy director of Richard Nixon's notorious Committee to Reelect the President (dubbed Creep in the Watergate scandal), is running one of them. Republican operative Karl Rove runs another. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a third.

The Supreme Court's *Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission* made it possible. The Federal Election Commission says only 32 percent of groups paying for election ads are disclosing the names of their donors. By comparison, in the 2006 midterm, 97 percent disclosed; in 2008, almost half disclosed.

We're back to the late 19th century when the lackeys of robber barons literally deposited sacks of cash on the desks of friendly legislators. The public never knew who was bribing whom.

Just before it recessed the House passed a bill that would require that the names of all such donors be publicly disclosed. But it couldn't get through the Senate. Every Republican voted against it. (To see how far the GOP has come, nearly ten years ago campaign disclosure was supported by 48 of 54 Republican senators.)

Here's the third part of the perfect storm. Most Americans are in trouble. Their jobs, incomes, savings, and even homes are on the line. They need a government that's working for them, not for the privileged and the powerful.

Yet their state and local taxes are rising. And their services are being cut. Teachers and firefighters are being laid off. The roads and bridges they count on are crumbling, pipelines are leaking, schools are dilapidated, and public libraries are being shut.

There's no jobs bill to speak of. No WPA to hire those who can't find jobs in the private sector. Unemployment insurance doesn't reach half of the unemployed.

Washington says nothing can be done. There's no money left.

No money? The marginal income tax rate on the very rich is the lowest it's been in more than 80 years. Under President Dwight Eisenhower (who no one would have accused of being a radical) it was 91 percent. Now it's 36 percent. Congress is even fighting over whether to end the temporary Bush tax cut for the rich and return them to the Clinton top tax of 39 percent.

Much of the income of the highest earners is treated as capital gains, anyway — subject to a 15 percent tax. The typical hedge-fund and private-equity manager paid only 17 percent last year. Their earnings were not exactly modest. The top 15 hedge-fund managers earned an average of \$1 billion.

Congress won't even return to the estate tax in place during the Clinton administration — which applied only to those in the top 2 percent of incomes.

It won't limit the tax deductions of the very rich, which include interest payments on multi-million dollar mortgages. (Yet Wall Street refuses to allow homeowners who can't meet mortgage payments to include their primary residence in personal bankruptcy.)

There's plenty of money to help stranded Americans, just not the political will to raise it. And at the rate secret money is flooding our political system, even less political will in the future.

The perfect storm: An unprecedented concentration of income and wealth at the top; a record amount of secret money flooding our democracy; and a public becoming increasingly angry and cynical about a government that's raising its taxes, reducing its services, and unable to get it back to work.

We're losing our democracy to a different system. It's called plutocracy.

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Robert Reich is Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written twelve books, including [The Work of Nations](#), [Locked in the Cabinet](#), and his most recent book, [Supercapitalism](#). His "Marketplace" commentaries can be found on [publicradio.com](#) and [iTunes](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:43 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Monday, October 18, 2010

[Dean Baker: Foreclosure Moratorium: Cracking Down on Liar Liens](#)

Foreclosure Moratorium: Cracking Down on Liar Liens

by: Dean Baker [article link](#)

October 18, 2010 | t r u t h o u t | Op-Ed

As we all know, there is a major philosophical divide in US politics. On the one hand, there are those who think it is the role of government to help ensure that the vast majority of the population can enjoy a decent standard of living. On the other side are those who believe the role of government is to transfer as much money as possible to the rich and powerful. The latter group seems to be calling the shots these days.

This is seen clearly in the "liar lien" scandal: the flood of short-order foreclosures that ignore standard legal procedures. The banks have been overwhelmed by the unprecedented volume of defaulting mortgages in the wake of the housing crash. Even under normal circumstances, foreclosure rates that in some areas exceed ten times normal levels would create an administrative nightmare.

But these were not ordinary loans. The highest rates of foreclosure are on the quick and dirty loans made at the peak of the bubble. These loans were issued to be sold. Almost immediately after the ink was dry, the issuers would sell these loans off to Citigroup, Goldman Sachs or other investment banks to turn them into mortgage-backed securities. The investment banks themselves were running short order operations. More rapid securitization meant more profits.

In this process, the paper work often came as an afterthought. As a result, necessary documents weren't signed, title transfers weren't properly registered, the notes tying loans to specific properties may not have been properly filed and other paperwork errors went uncorrected.

If the law were being followed, these issues would create serious problems for servicers trying to foreclose on homes where the owner had defaulted. Banks would have to spend the necessary time, paying high cost lawyers for their work, to reconstruct the paper trail needed to establish clear title to the house and the documentation that would allow them to foreclose on a delinquent borrower.

In some cases, this may not even be possible. Many of the issuers that dominated the nonprime mortgage market at the peak of the bubble are no longer in business. They probably did not make sure that all the documentation went to the right place before they closed their doors.

If the Wall Street banks were like the rest of us, the policy response would be simple: follow the frigging law. If banks want to foreclose, then they should have to present the court with the proper documents, end of story. Anyone who has ever bought a house or refinanced a mortgage knows the headaches involved. Everything must be in order, a process that can cost thousands of dollars in fees, as a long sheaf of documents is signed in the presence of a lawyer. This process can easily take two hours.

The banks don't think that they should have to endure the same expensive tedium as the rest of us. For them, these processes are simply formalities that can be circumvented. Hence, the "robo-signers," who are paid to put their names to documents that they know nothing about.

Some people have been wrongly foreclosed in this process, precisely the sort of mistake that the bureaucratic formalities are intended to prevent. More frequently, homeowners have probably been assessed fees and penalties that they do not actually owe. To the banks, this is just another unfortunate error in the high-speed foreclosure process.

In this context, the demand for a foreclosure moratorium makes perfect sense to those who think that it is the responsibility of government to protect the majority of the population. After all, if someone has fallen behind in paying their bills, they still have a right to expect that the law get followed.

A foreclosure moratorium would allow regulators to ensure that the servicers have systems in place that guarantee that the right procedures are followed. A moratorium on foreclosures would serve the same purpose as the moratorium on deep-sea drilling following the BP disaster. The alternative - that we should trust the banks - doesn't pass the laugh test.

By contrast, those who believe that government exists to serve the rich and powerful point out that these procedures will raise costs for banks. In some cases, they may not even be able to carry through a foreclosure, since the proper documentation does not exist.

The result could be billions of dollars in losses for the Wall Street banks. That may not put them out of business, but it certainly could knock a few million dollars off the bonuses of some top executives.

So, there you have it: the question of whether the Wall Street banks should have to follow the same rules as the rest of us. It is one of the most central philosophical questions underlying politics today.

[Dean Baker](#) is a macroeconomist and co-director of the [Center for Economic and Policy Research](#) in Washington, DC. He previously worked as a senior economist at the Economic Policy Institute and an assistant professor at Bucknell University. He is a regular Truthout columnist and a member of Truthout's Board of Advisers.

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Wall Street, White House blame homeowners in foreclosure crisis

by Tom Eley [article link](#)

October 18, 2010 | Global Research

"Fraudclosures" and Unemployment in America

by Danny Schechter [article link](#) [article link](#)

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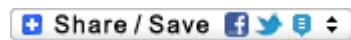
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Fixing the mortgage fraud

by Vox Day [article link](#)

October 18, 2010 | Silver Bear Cafe

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:48 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Sunday, October 17, 2010

[Paul Craig Roberts: The War On Terror](#)

The War On Terror

By Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 15, 2010 | Information Clearing House | Global Research | LewRockwell | OpEdNews

Does anyone remember the “cakewalk war” that would last six weeks, cost \$50-\$60 billion, and be paid for out of Iraqi oil revenues?

Does anyone remember that White House economist Lawrence Lindsey was fired by Dubya because Lindsey estimated that the Iraq war could cost as much as \$200 billion?

Lindsey was fired for over-estimating the cost of a war that, according to Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, has cost 15 times more than Lindsey estimated. And the US still has 50,000 troops in Iraq.

Does anyone remember that just prior to the US invasion of Iraq, the US government declared victory over the Taliban in Afghanistan?

Does anyone remember that the reason Dubya gave for invading Iraq was Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction, weapons that the US government knew did not exist?

Are Americans aware that the same neoconservarives who made these fantastic mistakes, or told these fabulous lies, are still in control of the government in Washington?

The “war on terror” is now in its tenth year. What is it really all about?

The bottom line answer is that the “war on terror” is about creating real terrorists. The US government desperately needs real terrorists in order to justify its expansion of its wars against Muslim countries and to keep the American people sufficiently fearful that they continue to accept the police state that provides “security from terrorists,” but not from the government that has discarded civil liberties.

The US government creates terrorists by invading Muslim countries, wrecking infrastructure and killing vast numbers of civilians. The US also creates terrorists by installing puppet governments to rule over Muslims and by using the puppet governments to murder and persecute citizens as is occurring on a vast scale in Pakistan today.

Neoconservatives used 9/11 to launch their plan for US world hegemony. Their plan fit with the interests of America’s ruling oligarchies. Wars are good for the profits of the military/security complex, about which President Eisenhower warned us in vain a half century ago. American hegemony is good for the oil industry’s control over resources and resource flows. The transformation of the Middle East into a vast American puppet state serves well the Israel Lobby’s Zionist aspirations for Israeli territorial expansion.

Most Americans cannot see what is happening because of their conditioning. Most Americans believe that their government is the best on earth, that it is morally motivated to help others and to do good, that it rushes aid to countries where there is famine and natural catastrophes. Most believe that their presidents tell the truth, except about their sexual affairs.

The persistence of these delusions is extraordinary in the face of daily headlines that report US government bullying of, and interference with, virtually every country on earth. The US policy is to buy off, overthrow, or make war on leaders of other countries who represent their peoples' interests instead of American interests. A recent victim was the president of Honduras who had the wild idea that the Honduran government should serve the Honduran people.

The American government was able to have the Honduran president discarded, because the Honduran military is trained and supplied by the US military. It is the same case in Pakistan, where the US government has the Pakistani government making war on its own people by invading tribal areas that the Americans consider to be friendly to the Taliban, al Qaeda, "militants" and "terrorists."

Earlier this year a deputy US Treasury secretary ordered Pakistan to raise taxes so that the Pakistani government could more effectively make war on its own citizens for the Americans. On October 14 US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ordered Pakistan to again raise taxes or the US would withhold flood aid. Clinton pressured America's European puppet states to do the same, expressing in the same breath that the US government was worried by British cuts in the military budget. God forbid that the hard-pressed British, still reeling from American financial fraud, don't allocate enough money to fight America's wars.

On Washington's orders, the Pakistani government launched a military offensive against Pakistani citizens in the Swat Valley that killed large numbers of Pakistanis and drove millions of civilians from their homes. Last July the US instructed Pakistan to send its troops against the Pakistani residents of North Waziristan. On July 6 Jason Ditz reported on antiwar.com that "at America's behest, Pakistan has launched offensives against [the Pakistani provinces of] Swat Valley, Bajaur, South Waziristan, Orakzai, and Khyber."

A week later Israel's US Senator Carl Levin (D,MI) called for escalating the Obama Administration's policies of US airstrikes against Pakistan's tribal areas. On September 30, the Pakistani newspaper, The Frontier Post, wrote that the American air strikes "are, plain and simple, a naked aggression against Pakistan."

The US claims that its forces in Afghanistan have the right to cross into Pakistan in pursuit of "militants." Recently US helicopter gunships killed three Pakistani soldiers who they mistook for Taliban. Pakistan closed the main US supply route to Afghanistan until the Americans apologized.

Pakistan warned Washington against future attacks. However, US military officials, under pressure from Obama to show progress in the endless Afghan war, responded to Pakistan's warning by calling for expanding the Afghan war into Pakistan. On October 5 the Canadian journalist Eric Margolis wrote that "the US edges closer to invading Pakistan."

In his book, [Obama's Wars](#), Bob Woodward reports that America's puppet president of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, believes that terrorist bombing attacks inside Pakistan for which the Taliban are blamed are in fact CIA operations designed to destabilize Pakistan and allow Washington to seize Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

To keep Pakistan in line, the US government changed its position that the "Times Square Bombing" was the work of a "lone wolf." Attorney General Eric Holder switched the blame to the "Pakistani Taliban," and Secretary of State Clinton threatened Pakistan with "very serious consequences" for the unsuccessful Times Square bombing, which likely was a false flag operation aimed at Pakistan.

To further heighten tensions, on September 1 the eight members of a high-ranking Pakistani military delegation in route to a meeting in Tampa, Florida, with US Central Command, were rudely treated and detained as terrorist suspects at Washington DC's Dulles Airport.

For decades the US government has enabled repeated Israeli military aggression against Lebanon and now appears to be getting into gear for another Israeli assault on the former American protectorate of Lebanon. On October 14 the US government expressed its “outrage” that the Lebanese government had permitted a visit by Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who is the focus of Washington’s intense demonization efforts. Israel’s representatives in the US Congress threatened to stop US military aid to Lebanon, forgetting that US Rep. Howard Berman (D,CA) has had aid to Lebanon blocked since last August to punish Lebanon for a border clash with Israel.

Perhaps the most telling headline of all is the October 14 report, “Somalia’s New American Prime Minister.” An American has been installed as the Prime Minister of Somalia, an American puppet government in Mogadishu backed up by thousands of Ugandan troops paid by Washington.

This barely scratches the surface of Washington’s benevolence toward other countries and respect for their rights, borders, and lives of their citizens.

Meanwhile, to silence Wikileaks and to prevent any more revelations of American war crimes, the “freedom and democracy” government in DC has closed down Wikileaks’ donations by placing the organization on its “watch list” and by having the Australian puppet government blacklist Wikileaks.

Wikileaks is now akin to a terrorist organization. The American government’s practice of silencing critics will spread across the Internet.

Remember, they hate us because we have freedom and democracy, First Amendment rights, habeas corpus, respect for human rights, and show justice and mercy to all.

Paul Craig Roberts, a former Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury and former associate editor of the Wall Street Journal, has been reporting shocking cases of prosecutorial abuse for two decades. A new edition of his book, [The Tyranny of Good Intentions](#), co-authored with Lawrence Stratton, a documented account of how Americans lost the protection of law, has been released by Random House.

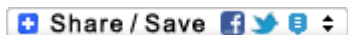
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Saturday, October 16, 2010

Chris Hedges: How Radical Christian Conservatives May Succeed in Destroying Democracy

How Democracy Dies: Lessons From a Master

How Radical Christian Conservatives May Succeed in Destroying Democracy

By Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 15, 2010 | Truthdig | AlterNet

The ancient Greek playwright [Aristophanes](#) spent his life battling the assault on democracy by tyrants. It is disheartening to be reminded that he lost. But he understood that the hardest struggle for humankind is often stating and understanding the obvious. Aristophanes, who had the temerity to portray the ruling Greek tyrant, Cleon, as a dog, is the perfect playwright to turn to in trying to grasp the danger posed to us by movements from the tea party to militias to the Christian right, as well as the bankrupt and corrupt power elite that no longer concerns itself with the needs of its citizens. He saw the same corruption 2,400 years ago. He feared correctly that it would extinguish Athenian democracy. And he struggled in vain to rouse Athenians from their slumber.

There is a yearning by tens of millions of Americans, lumped into a diffuse and fractious movement, to destroy the intellectual and scientific rigor of the Enlightenment. They seek out of ignorance and desperation to create a utopian society based on “biblical law.” They want to transform America’s secular state into a tyrannical theocracy. These radicals, rather than the terrorists who oppose us, are the gravest threat to our open society. They have, with the backing of hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate money, gained tremendous power. They peddle pseudoscience such as “Intelligent Design” in our schools. They keep us locked into endless and futile wars of imperialism. They mount bigoted crusades against gays, immigrants, liberals and Muslims. They turn our judiciary, in the name of conservative values, over to corporations. They have transformed our liberal class into hand puppets for corporate power. And we remain meek and supine.

The huge amount of taxpayer money doled out to Wall Street, investment banks, the oil and natural gas industry and the defense industry, along with the dismantling of our manufacturing sector, is why we are impoverished. It is why our houses are being foreclosed on. It is why some 45 million Americans are denied medical care. It is why our infrastructure, from public schools to bridges, is rotting. It is why many of us cannot find jobs. We are being fleeced. The flagrant theft of public funds and rise of an obscenely rich oligarchic class is masked by the tough talk of demagogues, themselves millionaires, who use fear and bombast to keep us afraid, confused and enslaved.

Aristophanes saw the same psychological and political manipulation undermine the democratic state in ancient Athens. He repeatedly warned Athenians in plays such as “The Clouds,” “The Wasps,” “The Birds,” “The Frogs” and “Lysistrata” that permitting political leaders who shout “I shall never betray the Athenian!” or “I shall keep up the fight in defense of the people forever!” to get their hands on state funds and power would end with the citizens enslaved.

“The truth is, they want you, you see, to be poor,” Aristophanes wrote in his play “The Wasps.” “If you don’t know the reason, I’ll tell you. It’s to train you to know who your tamer is. Then, whenever he gives you a whistle and sets you against an opponent of his, you jump out and tear them to pieces.”

Our democracy, through years of war, theft and corruption, is also being diminished. But the example Aristophanes offers is not a hopeful one. He held up the same corruption to his fellow Greeks. He repeatedly chided them for not rising up and fighting back. He warned, ominously, that by the time most citizens awoke it would be too late. And he was right. The appearance of normality lulls us into a false hope and submission. Those who shout most loudly in defense of the ideals of the founding fathers, the sacredness of Constitution and the values of the Christian religion are those who most actively seek to subvert the principles they claim to champion. They hold up the icons and language of traditional patriotism, the

rule of law and Christian charity to demolish the belief systems that give them cultural and political legitimacy. And those who should defend these beliefs are cowed and silent.

“For a considerable length of time the normality of the normal world is the most efficient protection against disclosure of totalitarian mass crimes,” [Hannah Arendt](#) wrote in “The Origins of Totalitarianism.” “Normal men don’t know that everything is possible, refuse to believe their eyes and ears in the face of the monstrous. ... The reason why the totalitarian regimes can get so far toward realizing a fictitious, topsy-turvy world is that the outside non-totalitarian world, which always comprises a great part of the population of the totalitarian country itself, indulges in wishful thinking and shirks reality in the face of real insanity. ...”

All ideological, theological and political debates with the representatives of the corporate state, including the feckless and weak Barack Obama, are useless. They cannot be reached. They do not want a dialogue. They care nothing for real reform or participatory democracy. They use the tricks and mirages of public relations to mask a steadily growing assault on our civil liberties, our inability to make a living and the loss of basic services from education to health care. Our gutless liberal class placates the enemies of democracy, hoping desperately to remain part of the ruling elite, rather than resist. And, in many ways, liberals, because they serve as a cover for these corporate extremists, are our greatest traitors.

Aristophanes too lived in a time of endless war. He knew that war always empowered anti-democratic forces. He saw how war ate away at the insides of a democratic state until it was hollowed out. His play “Lysistrata,” written after Athens had spent 21 years consumed by the Peloponnesian War, is a satire in which the young women refuse to have sex with their men until the war ends and the older women seize the Acropolis, where the funds for war are stored. The play called on Athenians to consider radical acts of civil disobedience to halt a war that was ravaging the state. The play’s heroine, Lysistrata, whose name means “Disbander of Armies,” was the playwright’s mouthpiece for the folly and self-destructiveness of war. But Athens, which would lose the war, did not listen.

The tragedy is that liberals and secularists, like Obama, are not viewed as competitors by the corporate forces that hold power, but as contaminants that must be eliminated. They have sought to work with forces that will never be placated. They have abandoned the most basic values of the liberal class to play a game that in the end will mean their political and cultural extinction. There will be no swastikas this time but seas of red, white and blue flags and Christian crosses. There will be no stiff-armed salutes, but recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance. There will be no brown shirts but nocturnal visits from Homeland Security. The fear, rage and hatred of our dispossessed and confused working class are being channeled into currents that are undermining the last vestiges of the democratic state. These dangerous emotions, directed against a liberal class that as in ancient Athens betrayed the population, have a strong appeal. And unless we adopt the radicalism held by Aristophanes, unless we begin to hinder the functioning of the corporate state through acts of civil disobedience, we are finished.

Let us not stand at the open gates of the city meekly waiting for the barbarians. They are coming. They are slouching towards Bethlehem. Let us, if nothing else, like Aristophanes, begin to call our tyranny by its name.

Chris Hedges, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, is a senior fellow at [The Nation Institute](#). He writes a regular column for [Truthdig](#) every Monday. His latest book is [Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [8:33 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Friday, October 15, 2010

Timothy V. Gatto: What Are Our Alternatives To The Corporate Controlled Political Parties?

What Are Our Alternatives To The Corporate Controlled Political Parties?

By Timothy V. Gatto [article link](#)

October 14, 2010 | CounterCurrents

Who is Barack Obama and how is he any different than George W. Bush? Tell me, why do so-called “Progressives” continue to support this man and his fascist policies? It is becoming increasingly clear that this President will do nothing to impede the corporate agenda of control over the Federal government that will become the cornerstone of worker repression throughout the country.

1. The loss of public sector jobs was a blatant attempt to break the power of unions in this country. The largest percent of unionization is in the public sector. What is a so-called “progressive” doing, feeding the military on a scale much larger than the Bush Administration, while breaking the backs of the Unions in America? This just illuminates exactly what the Democrats have morphed into. The Republicans under eight years of power haven’t done as much damage to the worker’s movement than Obama has managed to do in the last two years!

One must turn to the public sector to see how Obama’s policies have resulted in the loss of thousands of teachers throughout the nation. Who is this man that proposes a longer school year in order for American students to “catch up” to the other nations across the globe while he presides over the firing of so many teachers? How can he justify 14 trillion dollars to bail out Wall Street while the people that are charged with educating our children are fired due to budget cuts? How can he justify spending 450 million dollars a day on foreign wars that do nothing for our general population while he has no clear objective or substantive reasoning except for the red-herring “War on Terrorism”?

2. Speaking about this “War on Terror”, we in the United States are being subjected to a campaign of terror from our own government! When the Defense Department puts “mini-nukes” in the hands of field commanders to use at their discretion as legitimate weapons of war, this sets the stage for a Third World War that will certainly bring this planet to extinction. As Fidel Castro wrote on Global Research:

“The Nuclear Winter theory has shown that "If such weapons did not exist, they could not be used. And at present, there is absolutely no rational argument for their use. If they cannot be used, they must be destroyed. By doing so we would protect ourselves from accidents, mistaken calculations or any bouts of insanity."

"...Any country that at present may be considering the nuclear option must acknowledge that by adopting such a decision, it would be endangering not only its own population but the entire world.

"... The use of nuclear weapons in the event of a total attack against an enemy would be suicidal due to the anomalous cold and darkness caused by the smoke from the fires generated by the bomb."

This is something that most people in the United States do not understand fully. The knowledge that the United States government has decided to put the use of nuclear weapons in the toolkit of regional commanders is something that many U.S. citizens know nothing about. I blame the corporate-government controlled mass media for this ignorance of the nuclear policies of the United States. To put it bluntly, the government does not want this to become general knowledge. Even the rogue state of North Korea signed a pledge that it will not be the first to use nuclear weapons. Unlike North Korea, the United States maintains a first use prerogative. Who is the terrorist state and why do Americans accept this?

These are but two issues that Democrats must consider when they go to the polls. I don’t know what the alternative to the two corporate parties is at the moment, but there must be an alternative sooner than later! We cannot exist as a country, or as a species, if the use of nuclear weapons becomes commonplace. You can thank your “Democratic” President for this new policy of first-use nuclear “strategy”.

Of course it is too late to change the dynamics of the political situation in this country prior to the next elections. Still, one must understand that most of the candidates presented, whether Republican or Democrats, are foisted upon us by their corporate benefactors. The everyday people have no real representation on the Federal level. This is a situation that must change, and change soon.

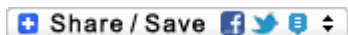
The United States is losing the war in Afghanistan, with 25,000 Taliban fighting 150,000 US and NATO troops to a standstill. This government in the United States must know that we have the third largest country by population in the World (as well as being the wealthiest country in the world) and most of us possess weapons. It is pure common-sense that if they can't stop an insurgency in one of the poorest nations on Earth against 24,000 fighters, what makes them believe they can stop an insurgency here in America? I'm not proposing anything like that, but if unemployment continues to run rampant, and the bulk of our tax dollars continue to go to the military-industrial complex that gives the American people nothing, something has to give way.

I could care less who is in Congress at the end of this election. The Republicans are no different than the Democrats. The Democrats have done nothing to restore our civil liberties by rescinding the invasive "Patriot Act" (the U.S. Enabling Laws similar to Nazi Germany) the Military Commissions Act or The John Warner Defense Bill that scrubbed the longstanding "Posse Comitatus" that refuted the use of Federal troops for law enforcement or end these imperialistic wars for resources. If the Republicans control Congress, nothing much will change except the rhetoric you will hear from the White House. The truth is that the Democrats have ceased to be the party of the people and like the Republicans are the party that represents the multi-national corporate world that have no interest except to turn a profit. Maybe it's time to take a fresh look at Democratic Socialism, maybe the Unions should look to the Socialists and start to reevaluate their allegiance to the Democrats who have done nothing but ravage the Unions. Maybe it's time we all started to look at political power in a whole new way before we find ourselves incinerated or facing a nuclear winter because of the belligerent policies of Washington. We can become serfs or control our own destiny, this is the challenge.

We still have choices. It is about time we started taking our choices seriously.

Former Chairman of the Liberal Party of America, **Timothy Gatto** is a retired Army Sergeant. He currently lives in South Carolina. He is the author of *Kimchee Days or Stoned Cold Warriors* and is currently at work on a new novel. Tim's political book, "*From Complicity to Contempt*" and "*Kimchee Days*" can be purchased at most online booksellers. The second book in the political series called "*Contempt to Outrage*" is due to come out Nov 15, 2010.

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[Dave Lindorff: Getting Tough On Banker Crime](#)

9 Million Stolen Homes

Getting Tough on Banker Crime

By Dave Lindorff [article link](#)

October 14, 2010 | CounterPunch

There are calls in this election season for establishing a moratorium of some sort on home foreclosures, and a number of large banks have even voluntarily stopped, at least until after Election Day, on foreclosing on houses. That's fine as far as it goes, but what about the millions of homes that have already been lost or stolen over the past several years?

Behind the talk of a legal moratorium on foreclosures, and the voluntary pause announced by some banks, lies the reality that many if not most of the mortgages in question are legally dubious. The homeowner getting a foreclosure notice frequently has no idea who the actual holder or holders of a mortgage may be, and banks that are trying to foreclose often themselves have no idea who actually holds title to the papers. This is because with the securitization of mortgages, they

have been traded and re-traded, and often have even been diced up into pieces of mortgage-backed securities, so that the paper trail of ownership has been lost, perhaps irrevocably.

In some cases and some jurisdictions, federal bankruptcy courts have been tossing out foreclosure cases, saying that the foreclosing bank has no proof of ownership of the mortgage and thus cannot claim the property. It's a little like the person who is caught speeding and shows up in court to contest the charge only to have it tossed out because the ticketing officer didn't show up in court to make her or his case.

The truth is that there is nothing particularly virtuous about the moratorium that Bank of America and some other national banks have announced on foreclosures. They are probably only holding off because they know that they are in trouble for fraudulently signing and processing foreclosure documents claiming title to properties that they actually cannot prove they have any claim to. (It has even been suggested that the banks are temporarily halting foreclosures because they are afraid that the glut of foreclosed homes will depress the value of other properties which are in their mortgage portfolios, hurting their own balance sheets.)

But the real question is, why is nobody mentioning the over 9 million homes that have been foreclosed on already, or that have been threatened with foreclosure, in this longest and deepest recession since the 1930s.

If it is the right thing to do to put a stop to foreclosures until banks can prove ownership, then it is equally right to reverse, or pay damages for all those foreclosures that already occurred--1.3 million in 2007, 2.3 million in 2008, 2.8 million in 2009 and 1.6 million in just the first six months of this year--where there was bank fraud in the signing of documents, or where there is simply no paper trail to prove the bank in question owns the mortgage. (A difficulty is that if a foreclosed property was later sold, reversing the transaction could mean displacing another family that made a good-faith purchase from the bank, meaning that a compensation payment to the wronged first owner would be a better option.)

If an individual committed the kind of fraud that the nation's banks have been committing in order to steal someone's assets, she or he would be convicted of fraud and locked up in jail, yet not one banker has been locked up yet for mortgage foreclosure fraud.

This wave of foreclosures is really Grand Theft Home on an unprecedented scale. The number of homes foreclosed in 2004 was 677,000, so if we take that number as being an average foreclosure rate for ordinary times, and subtract it from the figures for following years, and if we assume that the balance of foreclosures are the result of the bank-induced recession, we're talking about six million homes that have been stolen by the banks. If each foreclosed home over the period 2005-July 2010 was worth an average of just \$50,000--probably a very conservative figure--we'd be talking about the theft through fraud or economic malpractice of some \$300 billion in the assets of ordinary citizen homeowners.

Actually, of course, the theft of assets from the public has been much greater, since every time a home is foreclosed in a neighborhood, the value of all the surrounding homes plunges, but that's a story for another day.

Just in terms of outright bank fraud and home theft, we are talking about perhaps hundreds of billions of dollars worth of property that has been stolen through forged papers. We are also talking about the heartless destruction of millions of families, who have been torn from their homes.

So why are we only discussing foreclosure moratoriums now and going forward? Why are we not seeing aggressive federal action by the Justice Department seeking restoration of title or compensation to families who have already lost their homes through bank fraud? As reported yesterday in the [Washington Post](#), 40 state attorneys general have joined together to file court challenges to the securitization of mortgages, but so far, this effort appears aimed primarily at requiring banks and mortgage companies, going forward, to comply with all legal requirements in foreclosing on properties, not at recovering stolen property. The focus of this effort is also not on prosecuting banks and bankers for perjury, though this would certainly be possible.)

Why is Congress not aggressively investigating this colossal theft?

It's one thing to say that financial institutions like Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JP Morgan Chase and Citibank are too big to fail. It is another to say that even though they are criminal enterprises that have perpetrated an unprecedented fraud on the public, they are too big to prosecute and to punish. That sounds like the way the Italian government has generally treated the Cosa Nostra.

Enough pussyfooting around! It's time to make the banks and the bankers pay for their crimes. If government is to have any purpose, it must be to protect the public against crime. Even libertarians agree with that concept. And we have been robbed blind by these banks.

The problem here is that we Americans have lost any sense of community. We don't really care about the millions who have had their homes stolen by the banksters, as long as our own homes haven't been stolen. We're so self-involved that we don't even recognize that it is in our own self-interest to protect others from foreclosure because if they lose their home, our neighborhood suffers. Even the people who are acting riled up--the Tea Party folks--are only concerned about their own taxes, not about their neighbors. There were stories during the 30s of people who rallied to block auctions and save their neighbors' homes and farms. No stories like that today. But at least we could demand political action from our so-called political leaders.

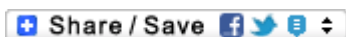
There's an election coming up Nov. 2. If the US Department of Justice and the attorney general offices of the 50 states cannot or will not go after the banks to demand the restoration of stolen properties to their rightful owners, and will not act to put the criminal bankers who committed fraud behind bars the way they do to the poor schmucks who pass a bad check, and if the House and Senate won't seriously investigate these crimes by the banks, they should all be thrown out of office, Republicans and Democrats alike, and to hell with the consequences.

We couldn't end up with anything worse than a government that coddles criminals, which is what we have right now.

Dave Lindorff is an award-winning veteran investigative journalist, a 1975 graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and is author of [Killing Time: An Investigation into the Death Penalty Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal](#) (Common Courage Press, 2003) and three other books. He is also a founding member of the online newspaper [ThisCantBeHappening!](#)

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Thursday, October 14, 2010

Michael Hudson: Why the U.S. Has Launched a New Financial World War

"Who Needs an Army When You Can Obtain the Usual Objective (Monetary Wealth and Asset Appropriation) Simply by Financial Means?"

Why the U.S. Has Launched a New Financial World War -- and How the Rest of the World Will Fight Back

By Michael Hudson [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 12, 2010 | CounterPunch | AlterNet

"Coming events cast their shadows forward." – Goethe

What is to stop U.S. banks and their customers from creating \$1 trillion, \$10 trillion or even \$50 trillion on their computer keyboards to buy up all the bonds and stocks in the world, along with all the land and other assets for sale in the hope of making capital gains and pocketing the arbitrage spreads by debt leveraging at less than 1 per cent interest cost? This is the game that is being played today.

Finance is the new form of warfare - without the expense of a military overhead and an occupation against unwilling hosts. It is a competition in credit creation to buy foreign resources, real estate, public and privatized infrastructure, bonds and corporate stock ownership. Who needs an army when you can obtain the usual objective (monetary wealth and asset appropriation) simply by financial means? All that is required is for central banks to accept dollar credit of depreciating international value in payment for local assets. Victory promises to go to whatever economy's banking system can create the most credit, using an army of computer keyboards to appropriate the world's resources. The key is to persuade foreign central banks to accept this electronic credit.

U.S. officials demonize foreign countries as aggressive "currency manipulators" keeping their currencies weak. But they simply are trying to protect their currencies from being pushed up against the dollar by arbitrageurs and speculators flooding their financial markets with dollars. Foreign central banks find them obliged to choose between passively letting dollar inflows push up their exchange rates - thereby pricing their exports out of global markets - or recycling these dollar inflows into U.S. Treasury bills yielding only 1% and whose exchange value is declining. (Longer-term bonds risk a domestic dollar-price decline if U.S. interest rates should rise.)

"Quantitative easing" is a euphemism for flooding economies with credit, that is, debt on the other side of the balance sheet. The Fed is pumping liquidity and reserves into the domestic financial system to reduce interest rates, ostensibly to enable banks to "earn their way" out of negative equity resulting from the bad loans made during the real estate bubble. But why would banks lend more under conditions where a third of U.S. homes already are in negative equity and the economy is shrinking as a result of debt deflation?

The problem is that U.S. quantitative easing is driving the dollar downward and other currencies up, much to the applause of currency speculators enjoying a quick and easy free lunch. Yet it is to defend this system that U.S. diplomats are threatening to plunge the world economy into financial anarchy if other countries do not agree to a replay of the 1985 Plaza Accord "as a possible framework for engineering an orderly decline in the dollar and avoiding potentially destabilizing trade fights." The run-up to this weekend's IMF meetings saw the United States threaten to derail the international financial system, bringing monetary chaos if it does not get its way. This threat has succeeded for the past few generations.

The world is seeing a competition in credit creation to buy foreign resources, real estate, public and privatized infrastructure, bonds and corporate stock ownership. This financial grab is occurring without an army to seize the land or take over the government. Finance is the new form of warfare - without the expense of a military overhead and an occupation against unwilling hosts. Indeed, this "currency war" so far has been voluntary among individual buyers and the sellers who receive surplus dollars for their assets. It is foreign economies that lose, as their central banks recycle this tidal wave of dollar "keyboard credit" back into low-yielding U.S. Treasury securities of declining international value.

For thousands of years tribute was extracted by conquering land and looting silver and gold, as in the sacking of Constantinople in 1204, or Incan Peru and Aztec Mexico three centuries later. But who needs a military war when the same objective can be won financially? Today's preferred mode of warfare is financial. Victory in today's monetary warfare promises to go to whatever economy's banking system can create the most credit. Computer keyboards are today's army appropriating the world's resources.

The key to victory is to persuade foreign central banks to accept this electronic credit, bringing pressure to bear via the International Monetary Fund, meeting this last weekend. The aim is nothing as blatant as extracting overt tribute by military occupation. Who needs an army when you can obtain the usual objective (monetary wealth and asset appropriation) simply by financial means? All that is required is for central banks to accept dollar credit of depreciating international value in payment for local assets.

But the world has seen the Plaza Accord derail Japan's economy by obliging its currency to appreciate while lowering interest rates by flooding its economy with enough credit to inflate a real estate bubble. The alternative to a new currency war "getting completely out of control," the bank lobbyist suggested, is "to try and reach some broad understandings about where currencies should move." However, IMF managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn, was more realistic. "I'm not sure the mood is to have a new Plaza or Louvre accord," he said at a press briefing. "We are in a different time today." On the eve of the Washington IMF meetings he added: "The idea that there is an absolute need in a globalised world to work together may lose some steam." (Alan Beattie Chris Giles and Michiyo Nakamoto, "Currency war fears dominate IMF talks," *Financial Times*, October 9, 2010, and Alex Frangos, "Easy Money Churns Emerging Markets," *Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2010.)

Quite the contrary, he added: "We can understand that some element of capital controls [need to] be put in place."

The great question in global finance today is thus how long other nations will continue to succumb as the cumulative costs rise into the financial stratosphere? The world is being forced to choose between financial anarchy and subordination to a new U.S. economic nationalism. This is what is prompting nations to create an alternative financial system altogether.

The global financial system already has seen one long and unsuccessful experiment in quantitative easing in Japan's carry trade that sprouted in the wake of Japan's financial bubble bursting after 1990. Bank of Japan liquidity enabled the banks to lend yen credit to arbitrageurs at a low interest rate to buy higher-yielding securities. Iceland, for example, was paying 15 per cent. So Japanese yen were converted into foreign currencies, pushing down its exchange rate.

It was Japan that refined the "carry trade" in its present-day form. After its financial and property bubble burst in 1990, the Bank of Japan sought to enable its banks to "earn their way out of negative equity" by supplying them with low-interest credit for them to lend out. Japan's recession left little demand at home, so its banks developed the carry trade: lending at a low interest rate to arbitrageurs at home and abroad, to lend to countries offering the highest returns. Yen were borrowed to convert into dollars, euros, Icelandic kroner and Chinese renminbi to buy government bonds, private-sector bonds, stocks, currency options and other financial intermediation. This "carry trade" was capped by foreign arbitrage in bonds of countries such as Iceland, paying 15 per cent. Not much of this funding was used to finance new capital formation. It was purely financial in character - extractive, not productive.

By 2006 the United States and Europe were experiencing a Japan-style financial and real estate bubble. After it burst in 2008, they did what Japan's banks did after 1990. Seeking to help U.S. banks work their way out of negative equity, the Federal Reserve flooded the economy with credit. The aim was to provide banks with more liquidity, in the hope that they would lend more to domestic borrowers. The economy would "borrow its way out of debt," re-inflating asset prices real estate, stocks and bonds so as to deter home foreclosures and the ensuing wipeout of the collateral on bank balance sheets.

This is occurring today as U.S. liquidity spills over to foreign economies, increasing their exchange rates. Joseph Stiglitz recently explained that instead of helping the global recovery, the "flood of liquidity" from the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank is causing "chaos" in foreign exchange markets. "The irony is that the Fed is creating all this liquidity with the hope that it will revive the American economy. ... It's doing nothing for the American economy, but it's

causing chaos over the rest of the world." (Walter Brandimarte, "Fed, ECB throwing world into chaos: Stiglitz," Reuters, Oct. 5, 2010, reporting on a talk by Prof. Stiglitz at Colombia University.)

Dirk Bezemer and Geoffrey Gardiner, in their paper "Quantitative Easing is Pushing on a String" , prepared for the Boeckler Conference, Berlin, October 29-30, 2010, make clear that "QE provides bank customers, not banks, with loanable funds. Central Banks can supply commercial banks with liquidity that facilitates interbank payments and payments by customers and banks to the government, but what banks lend is their own debt, not that of the central bank. Whether the funds are lent for useful purposes will depend, not on the adequacy of the supply of fund, but on whether the environment is encouraging to real investment."

Quantitative easing subsidizes U.S. capital flight, pushing up non-dollar currency exchange rates

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke's quantitative easing may not have set out to disrupt the global trade and financial system or start a round of currency speculation that is forcing other countries to defend their economies by rejecting the dollar as a pariah currency. But that is the result of the Fed's decision in 2008 to keep unpayably high debts from defaulting by re-inflating U.S. real estate and financial markets. The aim is to pull home ownership out of negative equity, rescuing the banking system's balance sheets and thus saving the government from having to indulge in a Tarp II, which looks politically impossible given the mood of most Americans.

The announced objective is not materializing. The Fed's new credit creation is not increasing bank loans to real estate, consumers or businesses. Banks are not lending - at home, that is. They are collecting on past loans. This is why the U.S. savings rate is jumping. The "saving" that is reported (up from zero to 3 per cent of GDP) is taking the form of paying down debt, not building up liquid funds on which to draw. Just as hoarding diverts revenue away from being spent on goods and services, so debt repayment shrinks spendable income.

So Bernanke created \$2 trillion in new Federal Reserve credit. And now (October 2010) the Fed is proposing to increase the Fed's money creation by another \$1 trillion over the coming year. This is what has led gold prices to surge and investors to move out of weakening "paper currencies" since early September - and prompted other nations to protect their own economies accordingly.

It is hardly surprising that banks are not lending to an economy being shrunk by debt deflation. The entire quantitative easing has been sent abroad, mainly to the BRIC countries: Brazil, Russia, India and China. "Recent research at the International Monetary Fund has shown conclusively that G4 monetary easing has in the past transferred itself almost completely to the emerging economies since 1995, the stance of monetary policy in Asia has been almost entirely determined by the monetary stance of the G4 - the US, eurozone, Japan and China - led by the Fed." According to the IMF, "equity prices in Asia and Latin America generally rise when excess liquidity is transferred from the G4 to the emerging economies."

Borrowing unprecedented amounts from U.S., Japanese and British banks to buy bonds, stocks and currencies in the BRIC and Third World countries is a self-feeding expansion. Speculative inflows into these countries are pushing up their currencies as well as their asset prices, but. Their central banks settle these transactions in dollars, whose value falls as measured in their own local currencies.

U.S. officials say that this is all part of the free market. "It is not good for the world for the burden of solving this broader problem to rest on the shoulders of the United States," insisted Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner on Wednesday.

So other countries are solving the problem on their own. Japan is trying to hold down its exchange rate by selling yen and buying U.S. Treasury bonds in the face of its carry trade being unwound as arbitrageurs are paying back the yen that they earlier borrowed to buy higher-yielding but increasingly risky sovereign debt from countries such as Greece. Paying back these arbitrage loans has pushed up the yen's exchange rate by 12 per cent against the dollar so far during 2010. On Tuesday, October 5, Bank of Japan governor Masaaki Shirakawa announced that Japan had "no choice" but to "spend 5 trillion yen (\$60 billion) to buy government bonds, corporate IOUs, real-estate investment trust funds and exchange-traded funds - the latter two a departure from past practice."

This "sterilization" of unwanted financial speculation is precisely what the United States has criticized China for doing. China has tried more "normal" ways to recycle its trade surplus, by seeking out U.S. companies to buy. But Congress would not let CNOOC buy into U.S. oil refinery capacity a few years ago, and the Canadian government is now being urged to block China's attempt to purchase its potash resources. This leaves little option for China and other countries but to hold their currencies stable by purchasing U.S. and European government bonds.

This has become the problem for all countries today. As presently structured, the international financial system rewards speculation and makes it difficult for central banks to maintain stability without forced loans to the U.S. Government that has long enjoyed a near monopoly in providing central bank reserves. As noted earlier, arbitrageurs obtain a twofold gain: the arbitrage margin between Brazil's nearly 12 per cent yield on its long-term government bonds and the cost of U.S. credit (1 per cent), plus the foreign-exchange gain resulting from the fact that the outflow from dollars into reals has pushed up the real's exchange rate some 30 per cent - from R\$2.50 at the start of 2009 to \$1.75 last week. Taking into account the ability to leverage \$1 million of one's own equity investment to buy \$100 million of foreign securities, the rate of return is 3000 per cent since January 2009.

Brazil has been more a victim than a beneficiary of what is euphemized as a "capital inflow." The inflow of foreign money has pushed up the real by 4 per cent in just over a month (from September 1 through early October). The past year's run-up has eroded the competitiveness of Brazilian exports, prompting the government to impose 4 per cent tax on foreign purchases of its bonds on October 4 to deter the currency's rise. "It's not only a currency war," Finance Minister Guido Mantega said on Monday. "It tends to become a trade war and this is our concern." And Thailand's central bank director Wongwatoo Potirat warned that his country was considering similar taxes and currency trade restrictions to stem the baht's rise, and Subir Gokarn, deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India announced that his country also was reviewing defenses against the "potential threat" of inward capital flows."

Such inflows do not provide capital for tangible investment. They are predatory, and cause currency fluctuation that disrupts trade patterns while creating enormous trading profits for large financial institutions and their customers. Yet most discussions of exchange rate treat the balance of payments and exchange rates as if they were determined purely by commodity trade and "purchasing power parity," not by the financial flows and military spending that actually dominate the balance of payments. The reality is that today's financial interregnum - anarchic "free" markets prior to countries hurriedly putting up their own monetary defenses - provides the arbitrage opportunity of the century. This is what bank lobbyists have been pressing for. It has little to do with the welfare of workers.

The potentially largest speculative prize of all promises to be an upward revaluation of China's renminbi. The House Ways and Means Committee is backing this gamble, by demanding that China raise its exchange rate by the 20 per cent that the Treasury and Federal Reserve are suggesting. A revaluation of this magnitude would enable speculators to put down 1 per cent equity - say, \$1 million to borrow \$99 million and buy Chinese renminbi forward. The revaluation being demanded would produce a 2000 per cent profit of \$20 million by turning the \$100 million bet (and just \$1 million "serious money") into \$120 million. Banks can trade on much larger, nearly infinitely leveraged margins, much like drawing up CDO swaps and other derivative plays.

This kind of money already has been made by speculating on Brazilian, Indian and Chinese securities and those of other countries whose exchange rates have been forced up by credit-flight out of the dollar, which has fallen by 7 per cent against a basket of currencies since early September when the Federal Reserve floated the prospect of quantitative easing. During the week leading up to the IMF meetings in Washington, the Thai baht and Indian rupee soared in anticipation that the United States and Britain would block any attempts by foreign countries to change the financial system and curb disruptive currency gambling.

This capital outflow from the United States has indeed helped domestic banks rebuild their balance sheets, as the Fed intended. But in the process the international financial system has been victimized as collateral damage. This prompted Chinese officials to counter U.S. attempts to blame it for running a trade surplus by retorting that U.S. financial aggression "risked bringing mutual destruction upon the great economic powers.

From the gold-exchange standard to the Treasury-bill standard to "free credit" anarchy

Indeed, the standoff between the United States and other countries at the IMF meetings in Washington this weekend threatens to cause the most serious rupture since the breakdown of the London Monetary Conference in 1933. The global financial system threatens once again to break apart, deranging the world's trade and investment relationships - or to take a new form that will leave the United States isolated in the face of its structural long-term balance-of-payments deficit.

This crisis provides an opportunity - indeed, a need - to step back and review the longue duree of international financial evolution to see where past trends are leading and what paths need to be re-tracked. For many centuries prior to 1971, nations settled their balance of payments in gold or silver. This "money of the world," as Sir James Steuart called gold in 1767, formed the basis of domestic currency as well. Until 1971 each U.S. Federal Reserve note was backed 25 per cent by gold, valued at \$35 an ounce. Countries had to obtain gold by running trade and payments surpluses in order to increase their money supply to facilitate general economic expansion. And when they ran trade deficits or undertook military campaigns, central banks restricted the supply of domestic credit to raise interest rates and attract foreign financial inflows.

As long as this behavioral condition remained in place, the international financial system operated fairly smoothly under checks and balances, albeit under "stop-go" policies when business expansions led to trade and payments deficits. Countries running such deficits raised their interest rates to attract foreign capital, while slashing government spending, raising taxes on consumers and slowing the domestic economy so as to reduce the purchase of imports.

What destabilized this system was war spending. War-related transactions spanning World Wars I and II enabled the United States to accumulate some 80 per cent of the world's monetary gold by 1950. This made the dollar a virtual proxy for gold. But after the Korean War broke out, U.S. overseas military spending accounted for the entire payments deficit during the 1950s and '60s and early '70s. Private-sector trade and investment was exactly in balance.

By August 1971, war spending in Vietnam and other foreign countries forced the United States to suspend gold convertibility of the dollar through sales via the London Gold Pool. But largely by inertia, central banks continued to settle their payments balances in U.S. Treasury securities. After all, there was no other asset in sufficient supply to form the basis for central bank monetary reserves. But replacing gold - a pure asset - with dollar-denominated U.S. Treasury debt transformed the global financial system. It became debt-based, not asset-based. And geopolitically, the Treasury-bill standard made the United States immune from the traditional balance-of-payments and financial constraints, enabling its capital markets to become more highly debt-leveraged and "innovative." It also enabled the U.S. Government to wage foreign policy and military campaigns without much regard for the balance of payments.

The problem is that the supply of dollar credit has become potentially infinite. The "dollar glut" has grown in proportion to the U.S. payments deficit. Growth in central bank reserves and sovereign-country funds has taken the form of recycling of dollar inflows into new purchases of U.S. Treasury securities - thereby making foreign central banks (and taxpayers) responsible for financing most of the U.S. federal budget deficit. The fact that this deficit is largely military in nature - for purposes that many foreign voters oppose - makes this lock-in particularly galling. So it hardly is surprising that foreign countries are seeking an alternative.

Contrary to most public media posturing, the U.S. payments deficit - and hence, other countries' payments surpluses - is not primarily a trade deficit. Foreign military spending has accelerated despite the Cold War ending with dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Even more important has been rising capital outflows from the United States. Banks lent to foreign governments from Third World countries, to other deficit countries to cover their national payments deficits, to private borrowers to buy the foreign infrastructure being privatized, foreign stocks and bonds, and to arbitrageurs to borrow at a low interest rate to buy higher-yielding securities abroad.

The corollary is that other countries' balance-of-payments surpluses do not stem primarily from trade relations, but from financial speculation and a spillover of U.S. global military spending. Under these conditions the maneuvering for quick returns by banks and their arbitrage customers is distorting exchange rates for international trade. U.S. "quantitative easing" is coming to be perceived as a euphemism for a predatory financial attack on the rest of the world. Trade and currency stability are part of the "collateral damage" being caused by the Federal Reserve and Treasury flooding the economy with

liquidity in their attempt to re-inflate U.S. asset prices. Faced with U.S. quantitative easing flooding the economy with reserves to "save the banks" from negative equity, all countries are obliged to act as "currency manipulators." So much money is made by purely financial speculation that "real" economies are being destroyed.

The coming capital controls

The global financial system is being broken up as U.S. monetary officials change the rules they laid down nearly half a century ago. Prior to the United States going off gold in 1971, nobody dreamed that an economy - especially the United States - would create unlimited credit on computer keyboards and not see its currency plunge. But that is what happens under the Treasury-bill standard of international finance. Under this condition, foreign countries can prevent their currencies from rising against the dollar (thereby pricing their labor and exports out of foreign markets) only by (1) recycling dollar inflows into U.S. Treasury securities, (2) by imposing capital controls, or (3) by avoiding use of the dollar or other currencies used by financial speculators in economies promoting "quantitative easing."

Malaysia successfully used capital controls during the 1997 Asian Crisis to prevent short-sellers from covering their bets. This confronted speculators with a short squeeze that George Soros says made him lose money on the attempted raid. Other countries are now reviewing how to impose capital controls to protect themselves from the tsunami of credit from flowing into their currencies and buying up their assets - along with gold and other commodities that are turning into vehicles for speculation rather than actual use in production. Brazil took a modest step along this path by using tax policy rather than outright capital controls when it taxed foreign buyers of its bonds last week.

If other nations take this route, it will reverse the policy of open and unprotected capital markets adopted after World War II. This trend threatens to lead to the kind of international monetary practice found from the 1930s into the '50s: dual exchange rates, one for financial movements and another for trade. It probably would mean replacing the IMF, World Bank and WTO with a new set of institutions, isolating U.S., British and Eurozone representation.

To defend itself, the IMF is proposing to act as a "central bank" creating what was called "paper gold" in the late 1960s - artificial credit in the form of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). However, other countries already have complained that voting control remains dominated by the major promoters of arbitrage speculation - the United States, Britain and Eurozone. And the IMF's Articles of Agreement prevent countries from protecting themselves, characterizing this as "interfering" with "open capital markets." So the impasse reached this weekend appears to be permanent. As one report summarized matters: "'There is only one obstacle, which is the agreement of the members,' said a frustrated Kahn."

Paul Martin, the former Canadian prime minister who helped create the G20 after the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, said "said the big powers were largely immune to being named and shamed." And in a Financial Times interview Mohamed El Erian, a former senior IMF official and now chief executive of Pimco said, "You have a burst pipe behind the wall and the water is coming out. You have to fix the pipe, not just patch the wall."

The BRIC countries are simply creating their own parallel system. In September, China supported a Russian proposal to start direct trading between the yuan and the ruble. It has brokered a similar deal with Brazil. And on the eve of the IMF meetings in Washington on Friday, October 8, Chinese Premier Wen stopped off in Istanbul to reach agreement with Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan to use their own currencies in tripling Turkish-Chinese trade to \$50 billion over the next five years, effectively excluding the U.S. dollar. "We are forming an economic strategic partnership. In all of our relations, we have agreed to use the lira and yuan," Mr. Erdogan said.

On the deepest economic lane, the present global financial breakdown is part of the price to be paid for the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury refusing to accept a prime axiom of banking: Debts that cannot be paid, won't be. They tried to "save" the banking system from debt write-downs in 2008 by keeping the debt overhead in place. The resulting repayment burden continues to shrink the U.S. economy, while the Fed's way to help the banks "earn their way out of negative equity" has been to fuel a flood of international financial speculation. Faced with normalizing world trade or providing opportunities for predatory finance, the U.S. and Britain have thrown their weight behind the latter. Targeted economies understandably seeking alternative arrangements.

Michael Hudson is a former Wall Street economist. A Distinguished Research Professor at University of Missouri, Kansas City (UMKC), he is the author of many books, including [Super Imperialism: The Economic Strategy of American Empire](#) (new ed., Pluto Press, 2002) and [Trade, Development and Foreign Debt: A History of Theories of Polarization v. Convergence in the World Economy](#). He can be reached via his [website](#), mh@michael-hudson.com

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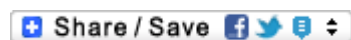
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Wednesday, October 13, 2010

[Maude Barlow: Our Commons Future Is Already Here](#)

A stirring call to unite the environmental and global justice movement from Maude Barlow

Our Commons Future Is Already Here

by Maude Barlow [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 13, 2010 | On the Commons | CommonDreams

Maude Barlow gave this stirring plenary speech, full of hope even in the face of ecological disasters, to the Environmental Grantmakers Association annual retreat in Pacific Grove, California. Barlow, a former UN Senior Water Advisor, is National Chairperson of the [Council of Canadians](#) and founder of the Blue Planet Project.

“Every now and then in history, the human race takes a collective step forward in its evolution. Such a time is upon us now.”

We all know that the earth and all upon it face a growing crisis. Global climate change is rapidly advancing, melting glaciers, eroding soil, causing freak and increasingly wild storms, and displacing untold millions from rural communities to live in desperate poverty in peri-urban slums. Almost every human victim lives in the global South, in communities not responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. The atmosphere has already warmed up almost a full degree in the last several decades and a new Canadian study reports that we may be on course to add another 6 degrees Celsius (10.8 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100.

Half the tropical forests in the world – the lungs of our ecosystems – are gone; by 2030, at the current rate of harvest, only 10% will be left standing. Ninety percent of the big fish in the sea are gone, victim to wanton predatory fishing practices. Says a prominent scientist studying their demise “there is no blue frontier left.” Half the world’s wetlands – the kidneys of our ecosystems – were destroyed in the 20th century. Species extinction is taking place at a rate one thousand times greater than before humans existed. According to a Smithsonian scientist, we are headed toward a “biodiversity deficit” in which species and ecosystems will be destroyed at a rate faster than Nature can create new ones.

We are polluting our lakes, rivers and streams to death. Every day, 2 million tons of sewage and industrial and agricultural waste are discharged into the world’s water, the equivalent of the weight of the entire human population of 6.8 billion people. The amount of wastewater produced annually is about six times more water than exists in all the rivers of the world. A comprehensive new global study recently reported that 80% of the world’s rivers are now in peril, affecting 5 billion people on the planet. We are also mining our groundwater far faster than nature can replenish it, sucking it up to grow water-guzzling chemical-fed crops in deserts or to water thirsty cities that dump an astounding 200 trillion gallons of land-based water as waste in the oceans every year. The global mining industry sucks up another 200 trillion gallons, which it leaves behind as poison. Fully one third of global water withdrawals are now used to produce biofuels, enough water to feed the world. A recent global survey of groundwater found that the rate of depletion more than doubled in the last half century. If water was drained as rapidly from the Great Lakes, they would be bone dry in 80 years.

The global water crisis is the greatest ecological and human threat humanity has ever faced. As Vast areas of the planet are becoming desert as we suck the remaining waters out of living ecosystems and drain remaining aquifers in India, China, Australia, most of Africa, all of the Middle East, Mexico, Southern Europe, US Southwest and other places. Dirty water is the biggest killer of children; every day more children die of water borne disease than HIV/AIDS, malaria and war together. In the global South, dirty water kills a child every three and a half seconds. And it is getting worse, fast. By 2030, global demand for water will exceed supply by 40%— an astounding figure foretelling of terrible suffering.

Knowing there will not be enough food and water for all in the near future, wealthy countries and global investment, pension and hedge funds are buying up land and water, fields and forests in the global South, creating a new wave of invasive colonialism that will have huge geo-political ramifications. Rich investors have already bought up an amount of land double the size of the United Kingdom in Africa alone.

We Simply Cannot Continue on the Present Path

I do not think it possible to exaggerate the threat to our earth and every living thing upon it. Quite simply we cannot continue on the path that brought us here. Einstein said that problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them. While mouthing platitudes about caring for the earth, most of our governments are deepening the crisis with new plans for expanded resource exploitation, unregulated free trade deals, more invasive investment, the privatization of absolutely everything and unlimited growth. This model of development is literally killing the planet.

Unlimited growth assumes unlimited resources, and this is the genesis of the crisis. Quite simply, to feed the increasing demands of our consumer based system, humans have seen nature as a great resource for our personal convenience and profit, not as a living ecosystem from which all life springs. So we have built our economic and development policies based on a human-centric model and assumed either that nature would never fail to provide or that, where it does fail, technology will save the day.

Two Problems that Hinder the Environmental Movement

From the perspective of the environmental movement, I see two problems that hinder us in our work to stop this carnage. The first is that, with notable exceptions, most environmental groups either have bought into the dominant model of development or feel incapable of changing it. The main form of environmental protection in industrialized countries is based on the regulatory system, legalizing the discharge of large amounts of toxics into the environment. Environmentalists work to minimize the damage from these systems, essentially fighting for inadequate laws based on curbing the worst practices, but leaving intact the system of economic globalization at the heart of the problem. Trapped inside this paradigm, many environmentalists essentially prop up a deeply flawed system, not imagining they are capable of creating another.

Hence, the support of false solutions such as carbon markets, which, in effect, privatize the atmosphere by creating a new form of property rights over natural resources. Carbon markets are predicated less on reducing emissions than on the desire to make carbon cuts as cheap as possible for large corporations.

Another false solution is the move to turn water into private property, which can then be hoarded, bought and sold on the open market. The latest proposals are for a water pollution market, similar to carbon markets, where companies and countries will buy and sell the right to pollute water. With this kind of privatization comes a loss of public oversight to manage and protect watersheds. Commodifying water renders an earth-centred vision for watersheds and ecosystems unattainable.

Then there is PES, or Payment for Ecological Services, which puts a price tag on ecological goods – clean air, water, soil etc, – and the services such as water purification, crop pollination and carbon sequestration that sustain them. A market model of PES is an agreement between the “holder” and the “consumer” of an ecosystem service, turning that service into an environmental property right. Clearly this system privatizes nature, be it a wetland, lake, forest plot or mountain, and sets the stage for private accumulation of nature by those wealthy enough to be able to buy, hoard sell and trade it. Already, northern hemisphere governments and private corporations are studying public/private /partnerships to set up lucrative PES projects in the global South. Says Friends of the Earth International, “Governments need to acknowledge that market-based mechanisms and the commodification of biodiversity have failed both biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation.”

The second problem with our movement is one of silos. For too long environmentalists have toiled in isolation from those communities and groups working for human and social justice and for fundamental change to the system. On one hand are the scientists, scholars, and environmentalists warning of a looming ecological crisis and monitoring the decline of the world’s freshwater stocks, energy sources and biodiversity. On the other are the development experts, anti-poverty advocates, and NGOs working to address the inequitable access to food, water and health care and campaigning for these services, particularly in the global South. The assumption is that these are two different sets of problems, one needing a scientific and ecological solution, the other needing a financial solution based on pulling money from wealthy countries, institutions and organizations to find new resources for the poor.

The clearest example I have is in the area I know best, the freshwater crisis. It is finally becoming clear to even the most intransigent silo separatists that the ecological and human water crises are intricately linked, and that to deal effectively with either means dealing with both. The notion that inequitable access can be dealt with by finding more money to pump more groundwater is based on a misunderstanding that assumes unlimited supply, when in fact humans everywhere are overpumping groundwater supplies. Similarly, the hope that communities will cooperate in the restoration of their water systems when they are desperately poor and have no way of conserving or cleaning the limited sources they use is a cruel fantasy. The ecological health of the planet is intricately tied to the need for a just system of water distribution.

The global water justice movement (of which I have the honour of being deeply involved) is, I believe, successfully incorporating concerns about the growing ecological water crisis with the promotion of just economic, food and trade policies to ensure water for all. We strongly believe that fighting for equitable water in a world running out means taking better care of the water we have, not just finding supposedly endless new sources. Through countless gatherings where we took the time to really hear one another – especially grassroots groups and tribal peoples closest to the struggle – we developed a set of guiding principles and a vision for an alternative future that are universally accepted in our movement and have served us well in times of stress. We are also deeply critical of the trade and development policies of the World

Trade Organization, the World Bank and the World Water Council (whom I call the “Lords of water”), and we openly challenge their model and authority.

Similarly, a fresh and exciting new movement exploded onto the scene in Copenhagen and set all the traditional players on their heads. The climate justice movement whose motto is Change the System, Not the Climate, arrived to challenge not only the stalemate of the government negotiators but the stale state of too cosy alliances between major environmental groups, international institutions and big business – the traditional “players” on the climate scene. Those climate justice warriors went on to gather at another meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia, producing a powerful alternative declaration to the weak statement that came out of Copenhagen. The new document forged in Bolivia put the world on notice that business as usual is not on the climate agenda.

How the Commons Fits In

I deeply believe it is time for us to extend these powerful new movements, which fuse the analysis and hard work of the environmental community with the vision and commitment of the justice community, into a whole new form of governance that not only challenges the current model of unlimited growth and economic globalization but promotes an alternative that will allow us and the Earth to survive. Quite simply, human-centred governance systems are not working and we need new economic, development, and environmental policies as well as new laws that articulate an entirely different point of view from that which underpins most governance systems today. At the centre of this new paradigm is the need to protect natural ecosystems and to ensure the equitable and just sharing of their bounty. It also means the recovery of an old concept called the Commons.

The Commons is based on the notion that just by being members of the human family, we all have rights to certain common heritages, be they the atmosphere and oceans, freshwater and genetic diversity, or culture, language and wisdom. In most traditional societies, it was assumed that what belonged to one belonged to all. Many indigenous societies to this day cannot conceive of denying a person or a family basic access to food, air, land, water and livelihood. Many modern societies extended the same concept of universal access to the notion of a social Commons, creating education, health care and social security for all members of the community. Since adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, governments are obliged to protect the human rights, cultural diversity and food security of their citizens.

A central characteristic of the Commons is the need for careful collaborative management of shared resources by those who use them and allocation of access based on a set of priorities. A Commons is not a free-for-all. We are not talking about a return to the notion that nature’s capacity to sustain our ways is unlimited and anyone can use whatever they want, however they want, whenever they want. It is rooted rather in a sober and realistic assessment of the true damage that has already been unleashed on the world’s biological heritage as well as the knowledge that our ecosystems must be managed and shared in a way that protects them now and for all time.

Also to be recovered and expanded is the notion of the Public Trust Doctrine, a longstanding legal principle which holds that certain natural resources, particularly air, water and the oceans, are central to our very existence and therefore must be protected for the common good and not allowed to be appropriated for private gain. Under the Public Trust Doctrine, governments exercise their fiduciary responsibilities to sustain the essence of these resources for the long-term use and enjoyment of the entire populace, not just the privileged who can buy inequitable access.

The Public Trust Doctrine was first codified in 529 A.D. by Emperor Justinian who declared: “By the laws of nature, these things are common to all mankind: the air, running water, the sea and consequently the shores of the sea.” U.S. courts have referred to the Public Trust Doctrine as a “high, solemn and perpetual duty” and held that the states hold title to the lands under navigable waters “in trust for the people of the State.” Recently, Vermont used the Public Trust Doctrine to protect its groundwater from rampant exploitation, declaring that no one owns this resource but rather, it belongs to the people of Vermont and future generations. The new law also places a priority for this water in times of shortages: water for daily human use, sustainable food production and ecosystem protection takes precedence over water for industrial and commercial use.

An exciting new network of Canadian, American and First Nations communities around the Great Lakes is determined to have these lakes named a Commons, a public trust and a protected bioregion.

Equitable access to natural resources is another key character of the Commons. These resources are not there for the taking by private interests who can then deny them to anyone without means. The human right to land, food, water, health care and biodiversity are being codified as we speak from nation-state constitutions to the United Nations. Ellen Dorsey and colleagues have recently called for a human rights approach to development, where the most vulnerable and marginalized communities take priority in law and practice. They suggest renaming the United Nations Millennium Development Goals the Millennium Development Rights and putting the voices of the poor at the centre.

This would require the meaningful involvement of those affected communities, especially Indigenous groups, in designing and implementing development strategies. Community-based governance is another basic tenet of the Commons.

Inspiring Successes Around the Globe

Another crucial tenet of the new paradigm is the need to put the natural world back into the centre of our existence. If we listen, nature will teach us how to live. Again, using the issue I know best, we know exactly what to do to create a secure water future: protection and restoration of watersheds; conservation; source protection; rainwater and storm water harvesting; local, sustainable food production; and meaningful laws to halt pollution. Martin Luther King Jr. said legislation may not change the heart but it will restrain the heartless.

Life and livelihoods have been returned to communities in Rajasthan, India, through a system of rainwater harvesting that has made desertified land bloom and rivers run again thanks to the collective action of villagers. The city of Salisbury South Australia, has become an international wonder for greening desertified land in the wake of historic low flows of the Murray River. It captures every drop of rain that falls from the sky and collects storm and wastewater and funnels it all through a series of wetlands, which clean it, to underground natural aquifers, which store it, until it is needed.

In a “debt for nature” swap, Canada, the U.S. and The Netherlands cancelled the debt owed to them by Colombia in exchange for the money being used for watershed restoration. The most exciting project is the restoration of 16 large wetland areas of the Bogotá River, which is badly contaminated, to pristine condition. Eventually the plan is to clean up the entire river. True to principles of the Commons, the indigenous peoples living on the sites were not removed, but rather, have become caretakers of these protected and sacred places.

The natural world also needs its own legal framework, what South African environmental lawyer Cormac Cullinen calls “wild law.” The quest is a body of law that recognizes the inherent rights of the environment, other species and water itself outside of their usefulness to humans. A wild law is a law to regulate human behaviour in order to protect the integrity of the earth and all species on it. It requires a change in the human relationship with the natural world from one of exploitation to one of democracy with other beings. If we are members of the earth’s community, then our rights must be balanced against those of plants, animals, rivers and ecosystems. In a world governed by wild law, the destructive, human-centred exploitation of the natural world would be unlawful. Humans would be prohibited from deliberately destroying functioning ecosystems or driving other species to extinction.

This kind of legal framework is already being established. The Indian Supreme Court has ruled that protection of natural lakes and ponds is akin to honouring the right to life – the most fundamental right of all according to the Court. Wild law was the inspiration behind an ordinance in Tamaqua Borough, Pennsylvania that recognized natural ecosystems and natural communities within the borough as “legal persons” for the purposes of stopping the dumping of sewage sludge on wild land. It has been used throughout New England in a series of local ordinances to prevent bottled water companies from setting up shop in the area. Residents of Mount Shasta California have put a wild law ordinance on the November 2010 ballot to prevent cloud seeding and bulk water extraction within city limits.

In 2008, Ecuador’s citizens voted two thirds in support of a new constitution, which says, “Natural communities and ecosystems possess the unalienable right to exist, flourish and evolve within Ecuador. Those rights shall be self-executing, and it shall be the duty and right of all Ecuadorian governments, communities, and individuals to enforce those rights.”

Bolivia has recently amended its constitution to enshrine the philosophy of “living well” as a means of expressing concern with the current model of development and signifying affinity with nature and the need for humans to recognize inherent rights of the earth and other living beings. The government of Argentina recently moved to protect its glaciers by banning mining and oil drilling in ice zones. The law sets standards for protecting glaciers and surrounding ecosystems and creates penalties just for harming the country’s fresh water heritage.

The most far-reaching proposal for the protection of nature itself is the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth that was drafted at the April 2010 World People’s Conference on Climate Change in Cochabamba, Bolivia and endorsed by the 35,000 participants there. We are writing a book setting out our case for this Declaration to the United Nations and the world. The intent is for it to become a companion document to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Every now and then in history, the human race takes a collective step forward in its evolution. Such a time is upon us now as we begin to understand the urgent need to protect the earth and its ecosystems from which all life comes. The Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth must become a history-altering covenant toward a just and sustainable future for all.

What Can We Do Right Now?

What might this mean for funders and other who share these values? Well, let me be clear: the hard work of those fighting environmental destruction and injustice must continue. I am not suggesting for one moment that his work is not important or that the funding for this work is not needed. I do think however, that there are ways to move the agenda I have outlined here forward if we put our minds to it.

Anything that helps bridge the solitudes and silos is pure gold. Bringing together environmentalists and justice activists to understand one another’s work and perspective is crucial. Both sides have to dream into being – together – the world they know is possible and not settle for small improvements to the one we have. This means working for a whole different economic, trade and development model even while fighting the abuses existing in the current one. Given a choice between funding an environmental organization that basically supports the status quo with minor changes and one that promotes a justice agenda as well, I would argue for the latter.

Support that increases capacity at the base is also very important, as is funding that connects domestic to international struggle, always related even when not apparent. Funding for those projects and groups fighting to abolish or fundamentally change global trade and banking institutions that maintain corporate dominance and promote unlimited and unregulated growth is still essential.

How Clean Water Became a Human Right

We all, as well, have to find ways to thank and protect those groups and governments going out on a limb to promote an agenda for true change. A very good example is President Evo Morales of Bolivia, who brought the climate justice movement together in Cochabamba last April and is leading the campaign at the UN to promote the Rights of Mother Earth.

It was this small, poor, largely indigenous landlocked country, and its former coca-farmer president, that introduced a resolution to recognize the human right to water and sanitation this past June to the UN General Assembly, taking the whole UN community by surprise. The Bolivian UN Ambassador, Pablo Solon, decided he was fed up with the “commissions” and “further studies” and “expert consultations” that have managed to put off the question of the right to water for at least a decade at the UN and that it was time to put an “up or down” question to every country: do you or do you not support the human right to drinking water and sanitation?

A mad scramble ensued as a group of Anglo-Western countries, all promoting to some extent the notion of water as a private commodity, tried to derail the process and put off the vote. The U.S., Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand even cooked up a “consensus” resolution that was so bland everyone would likely have handily voted for it at an earlier date. But sitting beside the real thing, it looked like what it was – an attempt, yet again, to put off any meaningful commitment at the UN to the billions suffering from lack of clean water. When that didn’t work, they toiled behind the

scenes to weaken the wording of the Bolivian resolution but to no avail. On July 28, 2010, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly voted to adopt a resolution recognizing the human right to water and sanitation. One hundred and twenty two countries voted for the resolution; 41 abstained; not one had the courage to vote against.

I share this story with you not only because my team and I were deeply involved in the lead up to this historic vote and there for it the day it was presented, but because it was the culmination of work done by a movement operating on the principles I have outlined above.

We took the time to establish the common principles that water is a Commons that belongs to the earth, all species, and the future, and is a fundamental human right not to be appropriated for profit. We advocate for the Public Trust Doctrine in law at every level of government. We set out to build a movement that listens first and most to the poorest among us, especially indigenous and tribal voices. We work with communities and groups in other movements, especially those working on climate justice and trade justice. We understand the need for careful collaborative cooperation to restore the functioning of watersheds and we have come to revere the water that gives life to all things upon the Earth. While we clearly have much left to do, these water warriors inspire me and give me hope. They get me out of bed every morning to fight another day.

I believe I am in a room full of stewards and want, then to leave you with these words from Lord of the Rings. This is Gandalf speaking the night before he faces a terrible force that threatens all living beings. His words are for you.

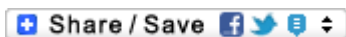
__“The rule of no realm is mine, but all worthy things that are in peril, as the world now stand, those are my care. And for my part, I shall not wholly fail in my task if anything passes through this night that can still grow fair, or bear fruit, and flower again in the days to come.

For I too am a steward, did you not know?” __ —J.R.R. Tolkien

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Money Talks: Corporations Become Humans and Curse Their Creator

by Tom Turnipseed [article link](#)

October 13, 2010 | CommonDreams

The Supreme Court's recent decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, gave corporations, unions and individuals First Amendment rights to donate unlimited amounts of money to buy political ads for candidates without disclosure. Meanwhile, corporate fat-cats, whose corporations are created by government, rant and rave against government and condemn government creation of public sector jobs programs for the poor and unemployed.

In *Citizens United* the five conservative justices composing the majority said, "... this court now concludes that independent expenditures, including those made by corporations, do not give rise to corruption or to the appearance of corruption. That speakers may have influence over or access to elected officials does not mean those officials are corrupt. And the appearance of influence or access will not cause the electorate to lose faith in this democracy." Can we keep faith in a government whose highest court makes such an absurd comment about big bucks being spent by "speakers" sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce and other special interests who lobby government for corporate and big moneyed interests? The Chamber's lobbyists led the defeat of the Disclose Act to close the loopholes created by the *Citizens United* decision.

Foreign corporations contribute money that goes into a Chamber of Commerce fund used to pay for political ads to defeat candidates who do not tow the line for their profits over people agenda. Playing key roles in the effort are Karl Rove who was George W. Bush's political hatchet man and the late Lee Atwater's protégé, and Ed Gillespie, former Republican National Committee Chairman and another Bush advisor. They are involved with a group called Crossroads GPS and its associated organization, American Crossroads. The groups are running ads in key Senate and Congressional races and are trying to raise \$52 million for ads in the November elections

The Court's conservative majority of justices were appointed by conservative politicians in the White House and confirmed by conservative US Senators who owed much of their political success to wealthy contributors and corporate interests. The history of corporate influence and control of our government is depressing.

In the 1886 case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company* the U.S. Supreme Court "ruled" that corporations are "persons" and have the same rights as human beings based on the 14th Amendment, which was intended to protect the rights of former slaves. However, in the decision itself the Supreme Court never ruled on personhood, but a former railroad president named J.C. Bancroft Davis who was the court reporter put the "ruling" in the decision's headnote:

"The court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are all of the opinion that it does."

Headnotes are not law but subsequent cases dealing with the issue accepted the headnote as precedent to give corporations rights under the Fourteenth Amendment like natural persons. Justice William O. Douglas's later lamented that, "corporations were now armed with constitutional prerogatives."

The *Buckley v. Valeo* decision in 1976 said donations could be restricted as potentially corrupting, but there should be no ceiling on expenditures since that could be like limiting speech itself (money equals speech). The McCain-Feingold law in 2002 closed a loophole that allowed companies to spend money "independently" just before elections designed to defeat targeted candidates, but that loophole was re-opened with *Citizens United*. The Court struck down the provision of the McCain-Feingold Act that prohibited all corporations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, and unions from broadcasting "electioneering communications" that mentioned a candidate within 60 days of a general election.

Ironically, government initiatives that would put people to work rebuilding our infrastructure are condemned as socialism by the plutocrats of corporate America. In an Orwellian twist the money magnates would have us forget that corporations are created by government statutes. Government limits their personal liability for acts perpetrated by them under the auspices of their corporations.

Corporations would not exist if government statutes did not allow them to make profits and shield shareholders from liability if the corporation is caught stealing, or otherwise damaging people. Corporate employees, including CEOs and other officers of a failing corporation can lose their jobs but are not personally liable to the corporation's creditors for their mismanagement. Corporations control the system that creates them by making campaign contributions to our elected officials, and by lobbying and influence peddling. Hiring relatives and staff of members of Congress also helps the big money interests to manipulate our government. Such tactics have enabled them to water down attempts to regulate their out-of-control greed that caused the worst economic recession since the great depression.

Democracy dies when corporations are given the rights of human beings and corporate bribery becomes free speech.

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Saturday, October 9, 2010

Felicity Arbuthnot: The Nightmare: The Iraq Invasion's Atrocities, Unearthing the Unthinkable

The Nightmare: The Iraq Invasion's Atrocities, Unearthing the Unthinkable

by Felicity Arbuthnot [article link](#)

October 9, 2010 | Global Research

"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." François-Marie Arouet - "Voltaire" (1694-1778.)

I have a deeply held belief that the duty of a commentator is, to the best of one's ability, to record, to shine light in often dark places, to act as a voice for those whose own voice, fears, plights might not be heard or known. To write about the emotions one sometimes feels when doing it, is an anathema and anyway a redundancy. The purpose is to attempt to draw attention to wrongs, not to whinge about the effects they can have - and any way, a private life should be just that. If politicians wish to strip themselves of their dignity and allude to everything from their sex life, to using private grief to gain sympathy votes, those with a shred of self-respect do not wish to emulate them. Here, I am breaking my taboo, for a reason.

Over the last several weeks I have again researched in depth, invasion's atrocities in Iraq, unearthing the unthinkable, switching off emotion and reading of terror, torture, monstrous wickednesses, word after sickening word. Then, Fallujah revisited (1) with document after document revealing the depth of the darkest depravities towards others, which can be plumbed, by "some mother's son" - or daughter. Indeed, some child's father or mother, able to shoot the children, toddlers, babies of others, in cold blood, drive over them in tanks, leaving the pathetic remains to be eaten by stray dogs.

Photographs viewed have included many which even hardened investigators have deemed: "too disturbing to view." This is not a view I hold. If family members who have survived, emergency workers (when not incinerated by U.S., troops themselves) medical staff, if not shot, imprisoned, tortured, or tied up with a bag over their head) can view, identify, bury with love and respect - or in the case of medical staff, carefully photograph, and note time, location of finding, then number, wrap and retain for a period, before burial, hoping a relative will claim the charred, mutilated, or worse, remains. It is a duty for those with any "voice", from countries responsible for this first documentable U.S., U.K., genocide of the 21st century, to draw attention to it, in the memory of and in tribute to, the voiceless, nameless, uncounted victims, in the hope that eventually, legal recourse might result.

In fact it was compassion which over came all - bodies and faces burned near beyond recognition, or the eviscerated, the all with the eyes, often, still staring out in a desperate silent plea for help, combined with utter bewilderment. "We have the scumbags on the run", wrote a marine on his website. "We lit them up", wrote another, as many took photographs of these lost souls - and sent them to porn sites in exchange for free viewing. And between the U.S., occupiers (now, surreally, re-branded "advisors" - same car, new paint) and what Hussein al-Alak of the Iraq Solidarity Campaign has called: " the U.S., imposed Vichy government, with their foreign passports ..", who will fight for justice for the Iraqis?

And, as since 1991, this is also a war against the unborn, new born and under fives. After the bodies and the rubble, the gore, blood and limbs, there are the deformities. The fledgling life, born without eyes, brain, with one cyclops eye, with no head, with two heads, with no limbs, or fingers - or too many. A biblical land turned to genetic and ecological Armageddon, for current and future generations, till the end of time. "Mission accomplished", said George W. Bush, in his ridiculous little flying suit, on the USS Abraham Lincoln on 1st May 2003. "Let freedom reign", he scribbled, after the first, corrupt, murderous, corpse-littered "elections". Result: "Let genocide commence."

The U.S., appointed "Viceroy" in Iraq, J. Paul Bremer, dressed for the part, Hollywood style, in ridiculous desert, or army boots, depending on your perception, arrived shortly after the invasion, seemingly believing in population reduction. Reportedly asking what the population of Iraq was, he was told, about twenty five million. His response was allegedly : "Too many, try five." But then, he had been Kissinger Associates' man.

As I read, I listened to the great and the good in various world legal bodies discuss whether the Congo and Rwanda should be "classed" as genocide. In July 2004, as U.S., troops were training for the Fallujah massacre, the coming November, the U.S., House of Representatives passed a unanimous resolution calling the tragedy of Darfur: "Genocide." They asked the administration to consider "Multilateral or even Unilateral" action, to end this genocide. Reluctance to take proactive steps to prevent further loss of human life was "criminal", they opined.

Seemingly genocides these days are only committed by Africans or Eastern Europeans, not those great bastions of democracy, U.S., U.K., and the "only democracy in the Middle East", ally Israel. The Israeli Defence Force, trained U.S., troops for the two week November 2004, Fallujah pogrom. (2) "If it moves, shoot it", was the order of the day. As two world wars, as Korea, Vietnam, the face of liberation never changes.

"Their tactics basically involve massive fire power ... bringing in tanks and helicopters to fire on targets ... demolishing buildings, establishing snipers on roofs, smashing holes in walls (and) shooting anything that moved." This in addition to: "... aerial bombardment and shell fire from large field guns." The plight of Fallujah: "Was not fully understood in the West, save by some of the survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto ... they were trapped (like) rabbits in a cornfield", being circled to be mown down and dismembered by combine harvesters.(3)The photographs are testimony to the chilling description. The unsung heroes are those who determined to record them, so some time, some where, the crimes would be known and legal retribution sought. These terrible, pathetic images, are the silent testimony to the first known Western genocide of the 21st century. Sadly, it is a near certainty that Iraq and Afghanistan will, in time, produce proof of more.

On visits to Iraq during the embargo years, when there was the silent genocide over nearly thirteen years of the U.S.-U.K.,-driven U.N., embargo's prohibition of all necessary to sustain the basics of life, with children dying of "embargo-related causes", at an average of six thousand a month, witnessing the heartbreak, the bafflement at their plight, the terrible guilt was always leaving. One saw and shared to some extent, the unimaginable, being perpetrated in one's name, then one left. Across the border, in Jordan, the lights were on, the towns bustled, clean water came out of the taps, and the illegal American and British bombs were not dropping. Yet so near, the children were dying, the people were dying, in the name of "We the people ..."

Looking through the photographs, reading of the near incomprehensible depths of sadistic destruction of their fellow human beings, men and women in uniform can uniformly sink to, I could also escape at the end of the day. I could make a meal, go and listen to live jazz at a favorite jazz pub, or simply pour a glass of wine and listen to music, surrounded by numerous books, collected pictures and loved items, in a home I enjoy, before seeking the warmth of the duvet and a comfortable bed.

But if the conscious mind can switch off, clearly the sub-conscious does not. One night the nightmare, one was sure was not a nightmare, but reality, struck. In the surreal world of nightmares, I "woke", to find myself saturated, blood pouring from under my arms. Wondering what was happening and what to do about it, I did, in nightmare-land, what I often do when working something out (though not usually at 3 a.m.,) and got the tools together and went out in to my garden. As ever, to trim and nurture plants, and bushes, mostly grown from tiny, often quarter inch cuttings, cosseted indoors, until clement weather, then planted outside, in sheltered warmth, and further fed and tended until suddenly seemingly overnight, a vibrant, colored addition, standing on its own roots, is ready to face all seasons. But my garden, with its protective hedges, (white flowers in summer, orange berries in winter and thorns to deter the trespasser ...) had gone. There were just bulldozer tracks, deep, ruining, not a leaf, stem or bloom left - just a wasteland.

Then, in nightmare-world, in my nightclothes, blood covered, I realised I had no keys to get back in. What if anyone found me in this state? I turned to the front door to try and figure a plan - but the building had gone. I was alone, bloody, near undressed and all had vanished, turning back to other familiar buildings, suddenly there was nothing. Just ruin, rubble and wasteland, as far as the eye could see. My life, my books, my comfort zone, were no more. Just the bloodied clothes I stood in remained.

Like walking away, I, of course, woke up - soaked and shivering. To a hot bath, a washing machine and a warm airing cupboard full of clean bed linen - my garden still intact. The people of Iraq, with their destroyed homes and gardens, fruit groves, date palm groves, or their vibrant plantings on balconies or flat roofs; the Palestinians, suffering the same plight for sixty two interminable years, and the people of Afghanistan in their flattened compounds, destroyed with their scented groves and gardens of blossoms and apricots, live a nightmare from which they never awake.

I thought again of the Iraqi child, whose parents had a beautiful garden, who showed a friend and I her drawing book, before the invasion. One picture had an abundance of flowers, carefully colored, in numerous hues, on the side were American soldiers - shooting at the flowers. "Why are the soldiers shooting the flowers?" We asked. "Because Americans hate flowers", she replied solemnly. It was a deeply saddening moment, that she represented so many children, who saw American as representing only wrath, fear and deprivation. She knew nothing of those Americans who had worked tirelessly to reverse the situation. If she has survived, she will be a young adult. She is unlikely to have changed her views.

In the U.K., Scottish parliamentarian, Dr Bill Wilson (4) is ploughing a determined path to bring Tony Blair to justice. In furtherance of this, he has now written to Scottish First Minister, Alex Salmond and Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill, calling for Scotland to adopt the recently agreed international definition of the crime of aggression into its legislature. His letter reads:

"The International Criminal Court's Review Conference of the Rome Statute in Kampala (5) earlier this year adopted a resolution by which it amended the Statute so as to include a definition of the crime of aggression and the conditions under which the Court could exercise jurisdiction with respect to the crime. The actual exercise of jurisdiction is subject to a decision to be taken after 1 January 2017 by the same majority of States Parties as is required for the adoption of an amendment to the Statute. However, I believe that there is now no legal obstacle to individual countries adopting the new definition of the crime of aggression into their own legislatures. I hope you will agree with me that it would be to Scotland's credit if we could be one of the first countries to do this, and it would be a fine legacy for the present Scottish Government to leave as it nears the end of its term."

He commented that, further, since the The International Criminal Court has now agreed on a definition of the crime of aggression: "I believe that although the ICC itself cannot prosecute on the basis of this for the time being, there is no impediment to individual countries adopting the definition into their own legislatures immediately. If Scotland did so, it would be an excellent example to the rest of the world and would send the clear message that we respect international law here. It would also create a powerful incentive for present and future UK Governments to think carefully before embarking on warfare.

"I think most Scots would not wish to see a repeat of the tragedy we have seen unfold in Iraq. This might be a way of preventing such misguided ventures in the future." Dr Wilson, is adamant: Scotland is in a position to: "... lead ethically in adopting the crime of aggression definition", and has legal advice which concurs. Dr Wilson plans to use Fallujah as an example of this aggression, but also points out there are surely numerous others, undocumented, as yet.

As John Pilger reminds, Blair promised that the (illegal) invasion of Baghdad would be " ... without a bloodbath and that Iraqis in the end would be celebrating ... In fact, the criminal conquest of Iraq smashed a society, killing up to a million people, driving four million from their homes, contaminating cities such as Fallujah with cancer-causing poisons and leaving a majority of young children malnourished in a country once described by Unicef as a 'model.' " (New Statesman, 30th September, 2010.)

As Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Somalia, now seem to be in would be imperial sights, a precedent which will flag a up a warning sign to leaders of ill intent, is surely needed. Dr Gideon Polya, who's work on excess deaths from invasions since 1950, states, in Afghanistan: "The annual death rate is 7% for under-5 year old Occupied Afghan infants, as compared to 4% for Poles in Nazi-occupied Poland, and 5% for French Jews in Nazi-occupied France."

The U.S., and U.K., whose leaders have trumpeted the dangers of the latest "new Hitler" in the countries they planned to decimate, have outdone the Nazis. Enough.

Notes

1. <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=21212> See also: www.billwilsonmsp.org
2. "[War Crime or Just War](#)", Nicholas Wood, South Hill Press, 2005.
3. See 2.
4. See 1.
5. ICC [Review Conference of the Rome Statute concludes in Kampala](#)

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Saturday, October 9, 2010

Roxanne Doty: SB1070 And The Banality Of Evil

SB1070 And The Banality Of Evil

By Roxanne Doty [article link](#)

October 2010 | Z Magazine

A heavysset man dressed in camouflage pants, boots, and a navy blue T-shirt stands in front of Sheriff Joe Arpaio's tent city. The man waves a large confederate flag with a rattlesnake in the middle and the words "Don't Tread on Me" written across the bottom. The flag swirls in the hot air of this May 2, 2009 afternoon. To the left of this man is another with an automatic weapon in a tactical drop holster strapped around his thigh. He is waving the flag of the state of Arizona. To the right of the first man is a guy dressed in black standing on a Mexican flag, holding a large banner that says "Deport All Illegal Scum." The eyes of these three men are fixed on a stream of marchers demanding comprehensive immigration reform who have walked six miles from downtown Phoenix.

The heavysset man, J.T. Ready, has periodically received attention from the local press and from watchdog organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center. In June 2010, he organized a "minutemen on steroids" patrol in the Arizona desert. His name has also surfaced in discussions of Russell Pearce, the person behind SB1070. Pearce has lately disowned Ready, though Ready has not necessarily disowned Pearce. Characters such as Ready and his buddies in the national socialist movement are only the most visible aspect of an unwanted inheritance.

Most policymakers do not like to speak of race and immigration in the same breath, but there are good reasons why the ghost of race is not easily put to rest when it comes to immigration. Decisions and policies formulated by government officials and citizen groups are bound up with a complex history in which racialized identities circulate in different guises. Powerful ideas such as the nation, sovereignty, national security, cultural integrity, and criminality orbit around these constructions in a complicated constellation that creates openings for such thought-stopping claims as: "It's got nothing to do with race. It's about obeying the law."

During the past several years all of these ideas, but especially security and crime have been cited as justifications for stricter immigration enforcement, culminating in Arizona's SB1070, Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act. Race has often been used to demonize those considered the enemy in times of war. We are now living through a moment in history in which war has been declared on undocumented migrants, their families, their communities, and by extension all of our communities. The goal is to make "them" go away. This war goes by the name of "attrition through enforcement" and is the brainchild of Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), which presents itself as an impartial, research organization, but which has been identified as part of the nativist lobby by the Southern Poverty Law Center. In May 2006, Krikorian wrote an article entitled "A Third Way," which he suggested was better than legalization or mass deportation. This third way, or "attrition through enforcement," would "prevent illegals from being able to embed themselves in our society, denying them access to jobs, identification, housing, and in general making it as difficult as possible for an illegal immigrant to live a normal life."

While no overarching federal or local enforcement strategy goes by the name of "attrition through enforcement," its underlying philosophy has been embraced by officials across the political spectrum and it has become the de facto way of dealing with undocumented immigration in various places such as Arizona. SB1070 is part of this strategy, but so are the numerous other anti-immigrant bills in Arizona and elsewhere that have preceded it and that will likely follow. Arizona's Proposition 200, which passed in November 2004 with 56 percent of the vote, was a forerunner of this strategy. Prop. 200 was a ballot initiative that, among other things, required proof of citizenship to vote. Ostensibly a local measure, it was pushed by a group called Protect Arizona Now (PAN). However, crucial support was provided by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) through a signature drive and ad campaign.

Dr. Virginia Abernathy who was brought in as an advisor at the time held leadership positions in several organizations that advocate racial purity—for example, the Council of Conservative Citizens that has its origins in the White Citizens Councils of the 1960s. Abernathy is currently on the advisory board of the *Occidental Quarterly*, a white separatist publication whose editor is Kevin MacDonald, director of the American Third Position, which has recently gained notoriety for its contributions to Arizona Governor Jan Brewer's defense fund.

In November 2006, Arizona passed 4 propositions all of which received more than 70 percent voter approval:

- * Prop.100 amended the Arizona constitution to deny bail to undocumented migrants charged with Class 1, 2, 3, or 4 felonies
- * Prop.102 denies civil lawsuit awards to anyone who is undocumented
- * Prop.103 makes English the official language of Arizona
- * Prop.300 requires undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition at public universities and prohibits them from receiving any type of financial assistance that is funded with state money

None of these have been enough for folks like Russell Pearce who now want to eliminate birthright citizenship for babies born to parents without documentation and charge undocumented children tuition for attending public schools.

Arizona is not alone in this frenzy to "rid" the country of migrants without papers. One of the earliest and most well-known pieces of local legislation was an ordinance passed by the City Council in Hazelton, Pennsylvania on July 13, 2006. This legislation made English the official language, imposed fines on landlords who rented to undocumented migrants, and revoked the business permits of those who hired them. The ordinance was found unconstitutional a year later, but that did not stop it from having a negative effect. People began packing up and leaving just as they are now doing in Arizona. The most recent is Fremont, Nebraska where voters approved a ban on hiring or renting property to undocumented migrants. The vote in Nebraska was the culmination of a two-year process of collecting signatures and putting the ban on the ballot.

These actions are not simply isolated local events, but part of the broader "attrition through enforcement" philosophy. They are often coordinated at the national level by anti-immigrant organizations such as FAIR and its affiliates. FAIR is based in Washington, DC and has over 200,000 members nationwide. It is the largest, oldest, and best known anti-immigrant organization and acts as something of an umbrella for the movement as a whole. Kris Kobach, the lawyer who wrote Arizona's SB1070, works for the Immigration Reform Law Institute, an affiliate of FAIR. Kobach was also involved in the Fremont, Nebraska ordinance. FAIR helped start the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) in 1985—the organization run

by Krikorian. FAIR and CIS, major players in the anti-immigrant movement, have supported border vigilantes such as the Minuteman Project. CIS reports, articles, and studies are widely cited by immigration researchers and frequently appear in the mainstream press. Its directors often testify on Capitol Hill and have played a central role in legitimating the exclusionary practices in place today.

The underlying logic of these strategies is a very dangerous one that functions to legitimate extremists such as J.T. Ready and creates an atmosphere of indifference, intolerance, and hate. Ordinary citizens and political leaders have bought into the dubious notions that our borders are not secure, that violence is spilling across the border from Mexico into the United States, and that most undocumented migrants are criminals.

We are constantly bombarded with these messages from our leaders, the press, and the television news media. Brewer's recent comment that most undocumented migrants were drug smugglers and John McCain's TV ad that says we need to finish "da dang fence" are prime examples of this. It should come as no surprise that folks like J.T. Ready are attracted to the anti-immigrant cause or that Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeau appears on a white supremacist radio program or that a white supremacist organization like American Third Position contributes to Governor Brewer's defense fund. Both the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League report significant increases in hate groups that use the national immigration debate to attract new members. Many, if not most, of these hate groups are white supremacist/white nationalist.

Folks like J.T. Ready and the overtly supremacist groups they belong to, as well as ostensibly more "moderate" groups such as Jim Gilchrist's Minuteman Project, no longer have center stage in the anti-immigrant movement. To a large extent they have been up-staged by elected officials and anti-immigrant lawyers like Kris Kobach who share important aspects of their ideology.

Writer Hannah Arendt coined the term the "banality of evil" to convey the notion that evil frequently happens not at the hands of extremists, but is enacted by everyday people, "just like us," who believe they are doing what must be done, who accept the misguided premises on which unquestioned ideas are often based. In an important sense, it is the banality of evil, rather than the overt displays of racism and intolerance, that is equally, if not more, dangerous to the country and the values it professes.

This is not to say that every individual who opposes immigration is a white supremacist. It is to suggest that powerful ideas about culture, national identity, and race have historically been intertwined in disturbing ways, which have permitted practices we as a nation now regret. Add to these, today's widespread (though factually inaccurate) narratives about security and crime and we have a situation that gives racism many places to hide.

Z

Roxanne Lynn Doty is a professor at Arizona State University and lives in the "epicenter of the anti-immigrant movement." She is the author of [The Law Into Their Own Hands](#) (University of Arizona Press, 2009).

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Friday, October 8, 2010

Robert Reich: The Secret Big-Money Takeover of America

The Secret Big-Money Takeover of America

by Robert Reich [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 8, 2010 | Robert Reich | CommonDreams

Not only is income and wealth in America more concentrated in fewer hands than it's been in 80 years, but those hands are buying our democracy as never before – and they're doing it behind closed doors.

Hundreds of millions of secret dollars are pouring into congressional and state races in this election cycle. The Koch brothers (whose personal fortunes grew by \$5 billion last year) appear to be behind some of it, Karl Rove has rounded up other multi-millionaires to fund right-wing candidates, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is funneling corporate dollars from around the world into congressional races, and Rupert Murdoch is evidently spending heavily.

No one knows for sure where this flood of money is coming from because it's all secret.

But you can safely assume its purpose is not to help America's stranded middle class, working class, and poor. It's to pad the nests of the rich, stop all reform, and deregulate big corporations and Wall Street – already more powerful than since the late 19th century when the lackeys of robber barons literally deposited sacks of cash on the desks of friendly legislators.

Credit the Supreme Court's grotesque decision in Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission, which opened the floodgates. (Even though 8 of 9 members of the Court also held disclosure laws constitutional, the decision invited the creation of shadowy “nonprofits” that don't have to reveal anything.)

According to FEC data, only 32 percent of groups paying for election ads are disclosing the names of their donors. By comparison, in the 2006 midterm, 97 percent disclosed; in 2008, almost half disclosed.

Last week, when the Senate considered a bill to force such disclosure, every single Republican voted against it – thereby revealing the GOP's true colors, and presumed benefactors. (To understand how far the GOP has come, nearly ten years ago campaign disclosure was supported by 48 of 54 Republican senators.)

Maybe the Disclose Bill can get passed in lame-duck session. Maybe the IRS will make sure Karl Rove's and other supposed nonprofits aren't sham political units. Maybe pigs will learn to fly.

In the meantime we face an election that marks an even sharper turn toward plutocratic capitalism than before – a government by and for the rich and big corporations — and away from democratic capitalism.

As income and wealth has moved to the top, so has political power. That's why, for example, it's been impossible to close the absurd tax loophole that allows hedge-fund and private-equity managers to treat much of their income as capital gains, subject to a 15 percent tax (even though they're earning tens or hundreds of millions a year, and the top 15 hedge-fund managers earned an average of \$1 billion last year). Why it proved impossible to fund expanded health care by limiting the tax deductions of the very rich. Why it's so difficult even to extend George Bush's tax cuts for the bottom 98 percent of Americans without also extending them for the top 2 percent – even though the top won't spend the money and create jobs, but will blow a \$36 billion hole in the federal budget next year.

The good news is average Americans are beginning to understand that when the rich secretly flood our democracy with money, the rest of us drown. Wall Street executives and top CEOs get bailed out while under-water homeowners and jobless workers sink.

A Quinnipiac poll earlier this year found overwhelming support for a millionaire tax.

But what the public wants means nothing if our democracy is secretly corrupted by big money.

Right now we're headed for a perfect storm: An unprecedented concentration of income and wealth at the top, a record amount of secret money flooding our democracy, and a public in the aftermath of the Great Recession becoming increasingly angry and cynical about government. The three are obviously related.

We must act. We need a movement to take back our democracy. (If tea partiers were true to their principles, they'd join it.) As Martin Luther King once said, the greatest tragedy is "not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."

What can you do?

1. Read Justice Steven's dissent in the Citizens United case, so you're fully informed about the majority's pernicious illogic.
2. Use every opportunity to speak out against this decision, and embarrass and condemn the right-wing Justices who supported it.
3. In this and subsequent elections, back candidates for congress and president who vow to put Justices on the Court who will reverse it.
4. Demand that the IRS enforce the law and pull the plug on Karl Rove and other sham nonprofits.
5. If you have a Republican senator, insist that he or she support the Disclose Act. If they won't, campaign against them.
6. Support public financing of elections.
7. Join an organization like Common Cause, that's committed to doing all this and getting big money out of politics. (Personal note: I'm so outraged at what's happening that I just became chairman of Common Cause.)
8. Send this post to your friends (including any tea partiers you may know).

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Robert Reich is Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written twelve books, including [The Work of Nations](#), [Locked in the Cabinet](#), and his most recent book, [Supercapitalism](#). His "Marketplace" commentaries can be found on [publicradio.com](#) and [iTunes](#).

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Wednesday, October 6, 2010

[Michael Edwards: Tyranny's Last Stand: The Tipping Point is Here](#)

Tyranny's Last Stand: The Tipping Point is Here

by Michael Edwards [article link](#)

October 5, 2010 | Activist Post

In Malcolm Gladwell's provocative book [The Tipping Point](#), he gives many examples of how seemingly small, insignificant decisions can radiate to cause an eventual wave of change that overtakes the prevailing modes of behavior. He clearly extrapolates how the silent leaders of society -- not the ones on TV, or the ones we appoint -- set trends through their singular ability to recognize an underlying need, or change of direction. It can be as simple as a clothing style, a type of cuisine, a new travel destination . . . or the need to change the world's political course. I believe there are signs that The Tipping Point for free humanity has been reached; from here on out, there will be an open dialogue between the forces of tyranny and the forces of freedom.

The idea that in order to recognize tyranny, you must force it to act as such is very much the case right now. Humanity is rebelling worldwide to the dictates of Elite overlords and petty bureaucrats alike. The small, silent statements of resistance have reached a classic tipping point. Whether it is tax rebellion, free speech, freedom of religion, the freedom to speak out against endless war, women's rights in oppressive regimes, or the freedom to grow one's own food in peace, the small defeats and victories have become a sustained chorus of resistance to ever-increasing forces of control. This chorus has coalesced from the choirs of different nations, different genders, different political affiliations, different races, and different socioeconomic positions. This is the ultimate sign of a true tipping point: critical mass has been reached.

The modern pantheon of enemies has now been identified, along with their demiurges, by even the most common of men. The enemies are the banking consortium; the global Elite born and bred from mega-wealth; the academics and economists who disconnect ideas from reality; and the scientific and military minds who are so compartmentalized by design that they rarely know what sort of dictatorship to which they are making their contributions. These are the groups that every man, woman, and child recognizes instinctively, because they are the same personalities encountered in our childhood. Until this point, these dictators have had the smugness to assume that the ones they view as the weak would cower forever.

These tyrants have vastly underestimated the power of numbers and the exponential factors by which simple numbers can increase to create a tipping point that can cause an overnight Sea change. The few who had the most courage, while enduring mass ridicule, have spoken out for decades against a coming full spectrum tyranny. These natural leaders are now raising their voices even louder and more urgently. Some of these pioneers have withdrawn from their previous missions in acknowledgment of The Tipping Point; many have decided to redouble their efforts. Regardless, little by little their collective audience has grown; whether in stadiums, or on Web sites, or in home discussion groups; the numbers have swelled, prompting a massive fear response from tyrants who know (with their instincts) when an uprising is taking place.

So now we see tyranny emerging in its most blatant form: citizen spies; government COINTELPRO operations against peaceful assembly; technological surveillance of every stripe, and the jackbooted common thug promoted to the top of the class in order to enforce an increasingly regimented society where thought is an actual liability.

The good news is that it is already too late for the forces of tyranny; they have had their reign for long enough -- The Tipping Point has been reached. The previous fence-straddlers -- even from the mainstream media -- are now sounding the alarm. And true patriots everywhere who have seen the writing on the wall for a long time coming are now sounding the charge. Tyranny has been fatally weakened by its continual pursuit of the lowest common denominator. All that remains is a hollow shell without the substance to counter a new Humanity tipping toward unbridled freedom.

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by Tom Burghardt [article link](#)

September 27, 2010 | Global Research | Antifascist Calling

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by Cindy Sheehan [article link](#) [article link](#)

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by Lydia Howell [article link](#)

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Chicago Activists Raided by FBI Refuse to Participate in "Fishing Expedition"

By Kevin Gosztola [article link](#)

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Jury Nullification May Be The Only Salvation For The Antiwar Activists

By Darren Wolfe [article link](#)

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March to Nowhere

by Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

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High Noon In America

By Giordano Bruno [article link](#)

10/06/2010 | Neithercorp Press

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What is important is that symbol of defiance that exists in every human being. That undeniable element of history that has shown us time and again the power of the individual in the progression of liberty. The choice to become a participant in the making of the future, instead of a spectator. We need this methodology now more than ever, especially in light of so many impending hardships. Our own clock is ticking away, the train is nearing the station, and time is not on our side. Do we hide, do we run, or do we face our fears, and everyone else's, and make good on our beliefs?

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Tuesday, October 5, 2010

Robert Jensen: Honest Talk About Economics, Empire, And Energy

Political Wish List: Honest Talk About Economics, Empire, And Energy

By Robert Jensen [article link](#)

October 05, 2010 | CounterCurrents

There's no shortage of political blather in this year's mid-term election campaigns, but most of us yearn for substantive discussion of the serious problems we face. What should the politicians be discussing? The University of Texas at Austin asked faculty members who teach about politics “to analyze, examine and provide their perspectives” on key political issues for the university's [web site](#), with new essays posted each weekday throughout the campaign season.

Below are my contributions, three short essays that raise critical questions about economics, empire, and energy that are routinely ignored by most politicians.

Economics: Doing business as if people mattered

By Robert Jensen

When politicians talk economics these days, they argue a lot about the budget deficit. That's crucial to our economic future, but in the contemporary workplace there's an equally threatening problem -- the democracy deficit.

In an economy dominated by corporations, most people spend their work lives in hierarchical settings in which they have no chance to participate in the decisions that most affect their lives. The typical business structure is, in fact, authoritarian -- owners and managers give orders, and workers follow them. Those in charge would like us to believe that's the only way to organize an economy, but the cooperative movement has a different vision.

Cooperative businesses that are owned and operated by workers offer an exciting alternative to the top-down organization of most businesses. In a time of crisis, when we desperately need new ways of thinking about how to organize our economic activity, cooperatives deserve more attention.

First, the many successful cooperatives remind us that we ordinary people are quite capable of running our own lives. While we endorse democracy in the political arena, many assume it's impossible at work. Cooperatives prove that wrong, not only by producing goods and services but by enriching the lives of the workers through a commitment to shared decision-making and responsibility.

Second, cooperatives think not only about profits but about the health of the community and natural world; they're more socially and ecologically responsible. This is reflected in cooperatives' concern for the “triple bottom line” -- not only profits, but people and the planet.

The U.S. government's response to the financial meltdown has included some disastrous decisions (bailing out banks to protect wealthy shareholders instead of nationalizing banks to protect ordinary people) and some policies that have helped but are inadequate (the stimulus program). But the underlying problem is that policymakers assume that there is no alternative to a corporate-dominated system, leading to “solutions” that leave us stuck with failed business-as-usual approaches.

It's crazy to trust in economic structures that have brought us to brink of economic collapse. But even in more “prosperous” times, modern corporations undermine democracy, weaken real community, and degrade the ecosystem. New thinking is urgently needed. Politicians who talk about an “ownership society” typically promote individual ownership of a tiny sliver of an economy still dominated by authoritarian corporate giants. An ownership society defined by cooperative institutions would be a game-changer.

None of this is hypothetical -- there are hundreds of flourishing cooperative businesses in the United States. [The United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives](#), provides excellent information and inspiring stories. In Austin, a cooperative-incubator group, [Third Coast Workers for Cooperation](#), offers training and support for people interested in creating democratic workplaces.

Putting our faith in institutions that have become too big to fail has failed. Institutions that are too greedy to defend can't be defended. Cooperative businesses aren't a magical solution to the critical economic problems we face, but a national economic policy that used fiscal and tax policies to support cooperatives would be an important step on a different path.

Empire: Affluence, violence, and U.S. foreign policy

By Robert Jensen

The United States is the most affluent nation in the history of the world.

The United States has the largest military in the history of the world.

Might those two facts be connected? Might that question be relevant in foreign policy debates?

Don't hold your breath waiting for such discussion in the campaigns; conventional political wisdom says Americans won't reduce consumption and politicians can't challenge the military-industrial complex. Though not everyone shares in that material wealth, the U.S. public seems addicted to affluence or its promise, and discussions of the role of the military are clouded by national mythology about our alleged role as the world's defender of freedom. Business elites who profit handsomely from this arrangement, and fund election campaigns, are quite happy.

There's one word that sums this up: empire. Any meaningful discussion of U.S. foreign policy has to start with the recognition that we are an imperial society. We consume more than our fair share of the world's resources, made possible by global economic dominance backed by our guns.

Today the United States spends as much on the work of war as the rest of the world combined, and we are the planet's largest arms dealer. Professor Catherine Lutz of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University reports in her book *The Bases of Empire* that we maintain 909 military facilities in 46 countries and overseas U.S. territories, and we have more than 190,000 troops and 115,000 civilians working at those sites. That's in addition to U.S. bases, military personnel, and contractors occupying Iraq and Afghanistan .

The military is there to project power, not promote peace. We regularly use these destructive forces, especially in the Middle East , home to the largest and most accessible energy reserves. Flimsy cover stories about terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, or self-indulgent tales about U.S. benevolence toward the people of the region, cannot obscure the reality of empire. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were unlawful, in direct violation of international law and the U.S. Constitution, but such details are irrelevant to empires.

Terrorism is real, of course, as are weapons of mass destruction. Law enforcement, diplomacy, and limited uses of military force need to be vigorously pursued through appropriate regional and international organizations to lessen the threats. Most of the world supports such reasonable and rational measures.

In its global policy -- especially in the Middle East -- U.S. policymakers prefer force, not only through invasion but also by backing the most repressive Arab regimes in those regions and unconditional support for Israel 's illegal occupation of Palestine . In the short term, this cynical and brutal strategy has given the United States considerable influence over the flow of oil and oil profits.

But these policies, which have never been morally acceptable, also aren't sustainable. Just as the age of affluence is coming to a close, so is the age of U.S. domination of the world.

That need not be bad news, if we can collectively tell the truth about our own greed and violence, and begin to shape a new vision of the good life and a new strategy for living as one nation in the world, not the nation on top of the world.

Energy: Recognizing how much isn't there

By Robert Jensen

Will America's energy crisis be solved by more aggressive pursuit of fossil fuels or by more vigorous development of renewables?

In this campaign season, there are politicians on all sides. Chants of “drill, baby, drill” ring out, while others sing the praises of wind and solar, and some argue we must try everything.

Unfortunately, politicians don't seem willing to face a more difficult reality: There is no solution, if by “solution” we mean producing enough energy to maintain our current levels of consumption indefinitely.

To deal with the energy crisis we must deal with a consumption crisis, but politicians are reluctant to run a campaign based on a call for “less” -- the American Dream, after all, is always “more.” But, whether the public and politicians like it or not, our future is about learning to live with less, starting with a lot less energy.

In the United States, we have been living with the abundance produced by an industrial economy, all made possible by the concentrated energy of fossil fuels. We tell ourselves this is the product of our hard work, but our life of plenty was made possible by the incredible energy stored in coal, oil, and natural gas. How long can that continue?

It's true that there's a lot of coal in the ground, but burning all that coal means an acceleration of global warming and climate disruption. Easily accessible reserves of oil and gas are quickly being exhausted, and while geologists can't tell us for sure when the wells will run dry, we should be thinking in decades, not centuries.

High-tech schemes for extracting oil from tar sands or “fracking” -- hydraulic fracturing, a process of injecting water and chemicals deep underground to force out pockets of gas -- are so ecologically destructive that they should be abandoned immediately. The same for most deep-water drilling; the Gulf disaster of the past year is a reminder that no matter how sophisticated the technology, we cannot control these processes. Nuclear energy presents the same trade-offs, magnified by our inability to dispose of the deadly waste safely.

There are more reasons to be positive about renewable energy sources, and intensifying research funding for wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass energy is the sensible move. But the reality to face there also is one of limits: None of those technologies, alone or in combination, will ever replace the energy stored in fossil fuels. The belief that because we want that energy we will create ways to produce it is the most naïve technological fundamentalism.

The most important step in dealing with our energy crisis is to realize just how much isn't there. Either approach -- believing that we can drill our way or invent our way out of the predicament -- is magical thinking. Instead of fantasies of endless abundance, we have to recognize that a radical shift in the way our lives are arranged is necessary for survival. The most obvious of these arrangements we need to change is our car-based culture, but it doesn't stop there. If there is to be a livable future, we need to commit in the present to major changes in our entire infrastructure.

The solution to the energy crisis can be stated simply: We must move around less and consume less. That means the solution is not only about where we get our energy, but how we define ourselves.

Robert Jensen is a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin and board member of the Third Coast Activist Resource Center in Austin. He is the author of *All My Bones Shake: Seeking a Progressive Path to the Prophetic Voice*, (Soft Skull Press, 2009); *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity* (South End Press, 2007); *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege* (City Lights, 2005); *Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim Our Humanity* (City Lights, 2004); and *Writing Dissent: Taking Radical Ideas from the Margins to the Mainstream* (Peter Lang, 2002). Jensen is also co-producer of the documentary film “Abe Osheroff: One Foot in the Grave, the Other

Still Dancing,” which chronicles the life and philosophy of the longtime radical activist. Information about the film, distributed by the Media Education Foundation, and an extended interview Jensen conducted with Osheroff are online [here](#).

Jensen can be reached at rjensen@uts.cc.utexas.edu and his articles can be found online [here](#). To join an email list to receive articles by Jensen, go [here](#).

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Timothy Gatto: We Need an Alternative to the Democrats and the GOP

We Need an Alternative to the Democrats and the GOP

By Timothy Gatto [article link](#)

October 4, 2010 | LiberalPro | OpEdNews

When I attended the One Nation Rally on October 2, I was gratified that the public has become so aware of the corporate control that has gripped both political parties. The graft, the campaign financing using practices such as "bundling" donations, the offers of employment at lobbying firms should a politician retire or lose his or her seat and the many "perks" offered to members of Congress like hunting trips, vacations and country club memberships just to name a few. As I mentioned before, it was gratifying because I have been writing about this for the last five years and it has only become an issue that the bulk of people know about for the last two years.

Many of my articles were printed at the bottom of the page on the many sites that carry my work. I guess that when I started writing about corporate control of our republic, that issue wasn't very sexy or thrilling. Still, it was to me and I'm glad I never quit writing about it.

I've been thinking of late about how to break free of the influence of that the corporations have on American politics. I believe that one must understand the complexities that plague this issue. Corporations have picked up First Amendment rights and are considered "people" by the courts. Even though this stemmed from a clerk's erroneous notations on a railroad right of way court case in the 1890's, the ruling has stuck. We are now at a position where most politicians don't want to upset the applecart and risk the big corporate donations, perks and graft to dry up. This includes both major political parties in the U.S.

After witnessing the One Nation Rally this week-end, I had my "Eureka!" moment. As I gazed from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and looked at the crowd, I saw all the Union representatives in different colored union member's shirts. I said to myself, this is your answer. When you think about what I'm about to propose, in my mind it's really a no-brainer. I'll bet that there are readers that are reading these words right now that know what I'm about to propose.

Since the corporations control the government (and I mean exactly that) it really makes no sense that the labor unions of this nation should support the Democratic Party. Ask yourself this simple question; why should unions support a political party that is in the control of corporate interests that the unions were designed to thwart in the first place? How can the unions get better pay and benefits for its workers when the political party they support is controlled by management? This isn't rocket scientist stuff, folks, it's just a simple question with a simple answer "they shouldn't. Especially when you consider that many corporations are ***trans-national corporations that could care less about the plight of the American worker!*** It is utter nonsense to support a political party that is in bed with the management of corporate entities that the unions must deal with in the support of their workers. Does that make any sense?

Therefore I am proposing that the unions themselves start thinking about starting a labor party in the United States.

This labor party could exist with the network that unions have already established. This party would eschew corporate funding and exist from the dues of union workers and the general public that is tired of the corporate control that exists over the Democratic Party today. Progressives, Socialists, Liberals and people that just want a stake in honest government could

contribute to this *American Labor Party*. When circumstances dictate, the Labor Party could work in a coalition with the Democrats to achieve shared goals.

I have often proposed that this nation needs more than just two major political parties. It's ludicrous to imagine that the plight of the many can be addressed by only two political parties that are nothing more than two-sides of the same coin, forgetting the rhetoric they use to divide us, sadly, that is what they are. Where's "The Change" that Obama promised us? The only change we received was from one corporate political party to the other.

I'm sending this article to every union I can find. Union members should broach this subject with their delegates. It may be too late to do anything during this election, so hold your nose and vote for the Democrat not of your choice. It's been decades since we got to vote for anyone except the lesser of two evils. We are sophisticated enough to change that. We owe it to our kids. We need to end these foreign wars, stop outsourcing American jobs and make sure that the 80% of American workers share more than 7% of the wealth of this great nation.

It's not enough to yell out of your windows that "We are sick and tired and we are not going to take it anymore!" We need a plan. You have just seen it.

Former Chairman of the Liberal Party of America, **Timothy Gatto** is a retired Army Sergeant. He currently lives in South Carolina. A regular contributor to OpEdNews, he is the author of *Kimchee Days or Stoned Cold Warriors* and is currently at work on a new novel. Tim's political book, "*From Complicity to Contempt*" and "*Kimchee Days*" can be purchased at most online booksellers. The second book in the political series called "*Contempt to Outrage*" is due to come out Nov 15, 2010.

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Monday, October 4, 2010

[Shamus Cooke: The Real Significance Of The One Nation Rally](#)

The Real Significance Of The One Nation Rally

By Shamus Cooke [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 04, 2010 | CounterCurrents | Global Research

How are we to interpret the massive One Nation demonstration in Washington D.C. on October 2nd? Was this a rally to elect Democrats? A progressive movement hijacked by the Democratic Party? Or something else?

It's true that most of the speakers at the event chose to speak about the November elections, and the importance of defeating the Republicans. In the weeks leading up to the rally, some of the organizers and much of the media decided that the "elections" should overshadow the main demand of the demonstration -- jobs.

But, the vast majority of the demonstrators did not show up to kick off the election season finale, they came to demand change. In fact, the [One Nation](#) website says explicitly: demand the change we voted for!

The demonstrators thus demanded jobs, education, immigrant rights, peace, etc. A demand is not a friendly request, but a confrontational act which implies a threat: create jobs or else.

Even some of the rally's pro-Democrat speakers talked in demanding voices about "bailing out main street" and "jobs," while they encouraged people to vote Democrat in November.

Of course this doesn't add up.

The Democrats have controlled Congress and the White House for two years with pitiful results: they have proven that working people take a back seat to corporations. The pointless wars continue at the expense of jobs and health care, education and social services.

The majority of demonstrators at the rally knew this; they didn't come to cheerlead but to DEMAND change -- changes the Democrats are totally unwilling or unable to implement.

This massive disconnect will not be easily resolved. The tremendous anger of working people that continues to build cannot be funneled into the Democrats -- the source of the anger.

Derailing this anger will be even harder from now on, since the One Nation demonstration proved that working people can unite together under a specific set of demands. This newfound unity can and will become the basis of future demonstrations organized by similar coalitions, against both the Democrat and Republican parties.

The biggest organizers of the One Nation coalition, the AFL-CIO and Change to Win, will be unable to push their members towards the Democratic Party for much longer: you cannot continue to campaign for politicians that you are continually demanding change from.

Sooner or later, the labor movement will be forced to break with this hopelessly flawed approach, which for 40 years has produced only disappointment, betrayal, and labor's decline.

When the unions declare their independence by raising their demands in a unified and coordinated manner, as they are beginning to do, it will mean that a formal political independence is not far off. Once the demands are clearly articulated, it will become overwhelmingly obvious that the Democratic Party has no interest in pursuing them, and working people will be compelled to consider other alternatives.

The labor movement might then address the issue of running their own candidates, as Richard Trumka, President of the AFL-CIO, indicated September 16 on the AFL-CIO blog. They will look back on October 2nd, 2010, as the inspiration for a new direction that labor initiated, the day that labor realized it could unite and energize working people on its own.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for [Workers Action](#). He can be reached at shamuscook@gmail.com

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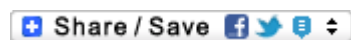
Cracks in the American Way, as Labor Stands Strong in Europe

by Michelle Chen [article link](#) [article link](#)

October 2, 2010 | In These Times | CommonDreams

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Sunday, October 3, 2010

Paul B. Farrell: America On The Brink Of A Second Revolution

America on the brink of a Second Revolution

Commentary: 2010 elections guarantee gridlock, anti-capitalist class war

By Paul B. Farrell [article link](#)

Sept. 28, 2010 | MarketWatch

ARROYO GRANDE, Calif. (MarketWatch) -- **“What’s distinctive about the Tea Party is its anarchist streak -- its antagonism toward any authority, its belligerent self-expression, and its lack of any coherent program or alternative to the policies it condemns,” warns Jacob Weisberg in Newsweek. But why not three cheers for the Tea Party Express?**

Admit it, something historic is brewing. And yes, it’s good for America, even the anarchy. Revolution is renewal. Tea-baggers want to take on both parties, “restore honor” and “take back the country.” Bring it on, the feeling’s mutual.

OK, maybe most Americans just silently mimic the words, “we’re mad as hell, won’t take it any more.” But watch out: After November the campaign’s shrill rhetoric explodes into action.

Tea-baggers are kicking the revolution into high gear. Debt is sinking America. Both parties are to blame. So vote out incumbents. Spare no one. We need new leadership, another Reagan or Truman. Congress better get the message: Cut that budget, or they’ll dump the rest of you in the coming Great Purge of 2012.

Unfortunately they’re tone deaf. Congress cannot see past the election. All that changes in November.

So thanks Tea Party, Vegas odds must favor a Second American Revolution. Actually, the revolution is already roaring, hot, it’s about time. The GOP and the Dems had more than a decade. But America’s worse off. We need a real revolution to restore sanity ... or we can kiss democracy and capitalism good-bye, permanently.

Warning: Another revolution will cost investors 20% more losses

Yes, big warning, the Second American Revolution will extract painful austerity, not the “happy days are here again” future touted by tea-baggers. For years it’ll be impossible for most of America’s 95 million investors to develop a successful investment or logical retirement strategy.

Why? Political chaos will translate into extreme volatility and a highly unpredictable stock market. Result: Wall Street will lose another 20% of the value of your retirement portfolio in the next decade, just as Wall Street did the last decade. So if you think you’re “mad as hell” now, “you ain’t seen nuthin’ yet!”

Here’s the timeline:

Stage 1: The Dems just put the nail in their coffin by confirming they are wimps, refusing to force the GOP to filibuster the Bush tax cuts for America’s richest.

Stage 2: The GOP takes over the House, expanding its war to destroy Obama with its new policy of “complete gridlock,” even “shutting down government.”

Stage 3: Obama goes lame-duck.

Stage 4: The GOP wins back the White House and Senate in 2012. Health care returns to insurers. Free market financial deregulation returns.

Stage 5: Under the new president, Wall Street's insatiable greed triggers the catastrophic third meltdown of the 21st century Shiller predicted, with defaults on dollar-denominated debt.

Stage 6: The Second American Revolution explodes into a brutal full-scale class war rebelling against the out-of-touch, out-of-control greedy conspiracy-of-the-rich now running America.

Stage 7: Domestic class warfare is compounded by Pentagon's prediction that by 2020 "an ancient pattern of desperate, all-out wars over food, water, and energy supplies would emerge" worldwide and "warfare is defining human life."

What's behind our 2010-2020 countdown? It became obvious after reading the brilliant but bleak "[Decadence of Election 2010](#)" report by Prof. Peter Morici, former chief economist at the International Trade Commission. He sees no hope from America's political parties, just a dark scenario ahead.

Here are the 10 points we see in his message:

1. Expect nothing positive from Dems, the GOP or Tea Party

Yes, we're all "justifiably ticked off." But "Democrats, Republicans, and yes the Tea Party offer little that is encouraging." Earlier Morici warned: "Democratic capitalism is in eclipse. ... Politicians have deceived voters," and are "suffering from delusions of grandeur, self deception and good old-fashioned abuse."

2. Democracy has become too-big-to-govern ... by anyone

"The current economic quagmire is a bipartisan creation." Bush failures led to a "Great Recession ... reckless Wall Street pay and fraud, a breakdown in sound lending standards by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac ... Countrywide, and a huge trade deficit with China and on oil" leaving "Beijing and Middle East royals with trillions of U.S. dollars that they invested foolishly" in bonds "financing the housing and commercial real estate bubbles."

3. Clinton, Bush, Obama policies all feeding revolutionary flames

Even before Bush, "all was set in motion by bank deregulation engineered by Clinton ... Secretaries Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers ... Clinton's deal to admit China into the World Trade Organization" handed "China free access to U.S. markets" while blocking exports. Earlier Dems blocked "domestic oil and gas development" and froze "auto mileage standards." Obama "finally imposed higher mileage requirements," but after pushing offshore drilling, he "punished the entire petroleum industry" for the BP disaster.

4. Bush's biggest mistake: Goldman CEO Hank Paulson

Morici admits: If Bush is "culpable for anything, it was to not see the gathering storm on Wall Street." Worse, his Treasury picks were disasters: [John] Snow was clueless, Paulson devious. He conned a clueless Congress into bailout trillions, "believing banks could borrow at 3% and lend at 5 and pay MBAs three years out of school five-million-dollar bonuses to create mortgage backed securities." Greed drove the Bush Treasury.

5. All partisan political leaders are destined to sabotage America

One thing is clear to Morici: Not only were America's leaders a "bunch of second-rate incompetents" on both the Clinton and Bush teams, "Obama's ratcheting up government spending and taxes won't fix what's broke, and neither will the GOP prescription of tax cuts and deregulation." Get it? Democracy is in a classic double-bind, no-win scenario.

6. America's democratic capitalism trapped in systemic failure

Morici simply dismisses "Obama's two signature initiatives -- health-care reform and financial services reregulation." They "simply don't work." Why? Politicians "failed to address the root problem, Americans pay 50% more for doctors, hospitals

and drugs, than subscribers to national health plans in Germany, France and other decadent socialist European countries.” Yet, insurers hate reform, will self-destruct America first.

7. Wall Street’s insatiable greed is a virus that never sleeps

Wall Street banks are “back to their old tricks,” warns Morici, “hustling municipal governments into the kind of quick-fix budget schemes, like selling parking meters and airport fees.” Why? Wall Street’s “hustling shoddy corporate bonds that lack adequate collateral and may never be repaid” to justify their absurd mega-bonuses. And they’ll keep doing it till the revolution creates a new non-capitalist banking system.

8. New political leaders offer no hope -- Wall Street rules America

GOP’s next leaders will fail: “Cutting taxes and mindless deregulation are not the answer.” We need the revenue. They have no real plan to trim “\$1 trillion from federal spending ... few believe deregulation will fix health care or Wall Street.” The GOP has no “effective government solutions to health care, Wall Street, fixing trade with China, and dependence on foreign oil.” And the Tea Party “only offers a purer form of failed Republicanism. Tax and spend less, and turn the country over to the robber barons.”

9. Praying for a messiah, we’re sleepwalking till the revolution

Morici’s solution: America “needs a prophet, another Harry Truman or Ronald Reagan.” But we’ll never get one, until a catastrophe hits. Wall Street’s so greedy, so corrupt, so untouchable, so much in control, they will bankroll and control all future “prophets.”

10. The Second American Revolution coming

Yes, extreme austerity: “Americans must accept fewer government-paid benefits -- for the rich, the poor and those in between -- and must acknowledge the market works best most of the time, but it is not working in health care, banking, China, and oil.” Huh? Sounds like classic economist’s double-speak: “The market works most of the time” ... except the market doesn’t work at all in the four biggest economic sectors? Fuzzy thinking?

Morici warns, we need “new approaches to regulating, yes regulating, what the medical industry charges, bankers pay themselves, what Americans tolerate and buy” and “guiding big oil and car companies to sustainable solutions.”

Holy cow, he suddenly sounds more like a liberal politician than conservative economist. Yes, he’s reflecting the total chaos coming on the short road to the Second American Revolution.

In the end, however, you have to admit the good professor does make a lot of sense: “Sounds radical but running the world has never been a choice between statism and anarchy,” says Morici.

Choice? Unfortunately, he offers a false choice: Running America effectively means accepting “that the private sector is not the enemy and government is not evil, but neither can serve the other, and us, if value is not seen in each.”

Laudable, but impossible because once the GOP Tea Party of No-No is back in power, compromising is not on their agenda, “gridlock” is. So anarchy is the only choice -- they will never, never work with Democrats ... until forced by the Second America Revolution when the middle class finally rises up and overthrows the greedy wealth conspiracy of Wall Street, Washington, CEOs and the Forbes 400.

Till then, anarchy rules as the conspiracy keeps looting Treasury, stealing from taxpayers, conning us all.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [10:02 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Saturday, October 2, 2010

[Harvey Wasserman: Hey Tea Party-Republicans: The Founders Are Not Your Guys](#)

Hey Tea Party-Republicans: The Founders Are Not Your Guys

by Harvey Wasserman [article link](#)

October 2, 2010 | CommonDreams

This is a Greco-Roman nation, gathered in a Hodenosaunee longhouse.

As they wrap themselves in the Constitution they mean to shred, that is the self-evident Truth the Tea/GOP Party ultimately cannot face.

Our legal godfathers---the ones Glenn Beck loves to conjure---were Deistic liberal humanists whose core beliefs he hates.

They dumped that tea because they despised the corporation that owned it and the idea of empire it (and today's corporate-military right) stood for.

The very first phrase of this nation's defining document, the Bill of Rights, says:

"Judaeo-Christian? Not a chance."

The grassroots farmers that made the Revolution were free-thinking hemp growers. Their favorite scribe, Tom Paine, was the son of a Quaker whose Age of Reason assaulted the church with unsurpassed fury. Today's Tea/GOP would have it burned.

Our greatest genius, Ben Franklin, was a proud and joyous sexual adventurer. His very presence today would induce howls of (envious) outrage from the religious right.

It was Franklin who most loved Native America. He introduced himself to the French as "an American savage." He stamped the Hodenosaunee (Iroquois) gifts of personal freedom and a democratic confederation into the soul of the new nation.

More formally, our tradition of direct voting, still alive in many New England towns, where the Revolution was born, was conceived in Athens, 508 BC. The Republic ("if you can keep it," as Franklin warned) came from Rome, 509 BC. Long before the "Christian Era."

The federal structure adopted in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, was---with Franklin's mentoring---based on the Iroquois Confederacy. That union was born at latest 1540 AD. It sustained a functioning democracy for at least 250 years, still longer than the US has been in existence.

The matriarchal Hodenosaunee were defined by a love of nature and communal land stewardship. Open dialog was as easily accepted as abortion and homosexuality. Along with so many other lethal diseases, Original Sin was an unwanted import.

It is the humanistic liberalism of America's Founders that STILL enrages today's neo-Puritan Tea/GOP. The Jefferson they love to claim fathered at least five children with his slave Sally Hemings, thirty years his junior. Some were conceived while he lived "alone" in the White House.

He and Franklin and Madison and Paine had no time for the Christian faith. It's by their intelligent design that Jesus appears nowhere in the Constitution. Their liberal Deism said a Creator got the universe going, installed the laws of nature, endowed humans with free will (and inalienable rights), then left.

Franklin's disdain for church services spices his autobiography. Jefferson clipped all references to a divinity for Jesus out of his personal Bible. Paine's Age of Reason still enrages the official church. Madison's First Amendment enshrines disdain for an official religion. Unitarianism in all its liberal diversity was shared by presidents two through six, including two Adamsses, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe.

Their system of checks and balances was based on the Socratic proposition that with the freedom to dialog, human reason will prevail. Thus the First Amendment's very first phrase exalts freedom from Religion, ie separation of church and state, a phrase coined by Jefferson, demanded by the new nation as a whole.

Like virtually all other American farmers, Washington and Jefferson raised serious quantities of hemp, and made good money from it. Franklin owned a paper mill that ran on it. All may well have smoked its psycho-active cousin, now known as marijuana. If you told them the nation they founded would make this versatile herb illegal, they would laugh at you.

They'd be equally horrified to hear the Foxist Tea/GOP claiming them as icons in a sectarian crusade for repression and empire.

Today's religious right is an unholy fusion of theocratic authoritarianism---which our Founders hated above all---and corporate tyranny, whose tea they pitched in Boston harbor.

Along with George III, there's nothing they loathed more than the anti-human hypocrisy we hear from the Foxist Legion.

Likewise, Beck, Pailn, Limbaugh, O'Reilly and their ilk would have shrieked with rage at the actual Franklin and Paine, Jefferson and Madison, not to mention the populist farmers and sailors, workers and women who fought and died for the Revolution we all Revere (yes, him too!).

So next time those Tea/GOP phonies gaze off in the distance to claim kinship with the Founders, remind everyone you know who really did win that Revolution and write that Bill of Rights.

Those hemp-growing, tree-hugging, corporate-hating deistic free loving and free thinking present-at-the-creation Americans believed above all that the Truth would keep us free.

Now more than ever, it's our patriotic duty to prove them right.

Harvey Wasserman's *SOLARTOPIA! OUR GREEN-POWERED EARTH, A.D. 2030*, is at www.solartopia.org. He is senior advisor to Greenpeace USA and the Nuclear Information & Resource Service, and writes regularly for www.freepress.org.

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Benjamin Todd Jealous: Anti-Tea Partiers Descend on Washington to Fight for a Stronger Economy

Anti-Tea Partiers Descend on Washington to Fight for a Stronger Economy

By Benjamin Todd Jealous [article link](#)

October 2, 2010 | NAACP | AlterNet

We are living through a very particular moment in American history, one where diversity is increasing, with prosperity decreasing. Barring great social movement, this is a formula for a battleground.

Since the dawn of the nation's worst economic crisis since the 1930s, progress has been made. We have expanded health care coverage to tens of millions of Americans, cut sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine by more than 80 percent, and saved more than 150,000 teachers' jobs.

Yet, what was a recession for most Americans remains a depression for too many. Black American unemployment is nearly twice that of whites. Eight million jobs have been lost and over 2.5 million Americans have lost their homes, with millions more in danger of foreclosure. Schools are closing at unprecedented rates, while Americans are being imprisoned at alarming rates. In each case, people of color suffer worse.

A strong workforce is the answer to this economic crisis. Families with jobs spend money and as consumers, their buying power increases, allowing businesses to expand and hire more employees. Rather than a trickle-down economy, where the rich get richer, we need to create new jobs and financial security for the middle class; only then can the economy grow. We have seen the impact of a top-heavy economy, reliant on prosperity trickling down to the masses, and the result is a nation where the top 10 percent of Americans holds 976 times more income than the bottom 90 percent of our nation's families.

Good and fair jobs must be the top priority, yet we face a Congress where a fringe minority rebuffs measures to do just that. The Miller Bill -- legislation that would create one million jobs -- is stalled in the House. Anything that could help, whether it was the extension of unemployment benefits over the July 4th holiday or efforts to prevent the firing of thousands of teachers nationwide, is met with a chorus of NO.

Simultaneously, far-right extremists have found their way back into the national dialogue, helping drive a regressive agenda. From the Voting Rights Act, to the Civil Rights Act, to the 14th Amendment, the very pillars of democracy are under attack.

Now is the time to get everyone off the benches and back onto the field.

We must be bold and aggressive in turning this situation around. We cannot remain quiet in the face of such clear and imminent danger. Tradition teaches us to run and not get weary, walk and not faint. We have made real progress and great strides, but we must press forward because our work is not simply for us, rather for future generations to come.

As humans, we possess the ability to imagine the future and its possibilities, to look forward with anticipation for a new tomorrow. But we cannot achieve that new day without putting boots on the ground and seeing to fruition the change that millions voted for in 2008. We have to say no to a country divided and yes to a country united.

On October 2nd we will stand together as One Nation, a broad multiracial coalition of advocates and activists. We will come together in the name of putting our nation back to work, educating each other and our children, ensuring justice for all Americans.

Critically important to putting the nation back to work and bolstering our economic outlook is a commitment to ensuring that every child has access to a good school and a quality education. Until our children are given an opportunity to get the best education available, we will never be able to compete in the new global economy, where far too many of our corporations are leaving our shores and relocating to get both cheap and skilled labor.

Yet far too many schools throughout our nation are failing our children. In North Carolina, the state is adopting measures to re-segregate schools, returning to the era of separate and unequal. The state's anti-diversity caucus has dismantled a nationally recognized socio-diversity student achievement policy, which will re-segregate bodies, budgets and the basic building blocks of a quality education.

We are the people who will decide whether our country stays in this valley of joblessness, foreclosures and despair, or fuel the hope and determination of the One Nation campaign, rise toward the mountaintop, and breathe new life into the great American dream.

We must harness our multiracial majority and make our narrative of hope and unity a renewed battle cry for change. Our voices cannot be consigned to a whisper nor can we stand passively on the sidelines, waiting invisibly for change.

Benjamin Todd Jealous is the president and CEO of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:17 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Friday, October 1, 2010

[**Ted Rall: Will Americans Act to Prevent Economic and Environmental Collapse?**](#)

Will Americans Act to Prevent Economic and Environmental Collapse?

by Ted Rall [article link](#)

October 1, 2010 | CommonDreams

PHILADELPHIA -- I am touring to promote my new book. "The Anti-American Manifesto" lays out America's biggest problems and what we can do to fix them.

Before I started out, I knew that Americans were angry. With a real unemployment rate of 20-plus percent and a government that gave \$1.4 trillion to banks instead of people in need, how could they not be?

Americans have lost faith in "their" government's willingness or ability to address their needs and concerns. But Americans' pessimism is deeper and broader than I thought. And their rage is burning white hot.

At the beginning of each event I ask attendees to answer two questions:

Question One: What is the worst problem that you face? Something the government could solve or at least mitigate? The top response is healthcare; either or they or someone they know can't afford to see a doctor. Other answers include making college affordable and improving mass transit. Some are arcane: at the top of one man's wish list is the metric system.

Question Two: What is the biggest problem the world faces today? Whether or not it personally affects you, what should be job one for government? Most people say global warming or ecocide in general. Many complain about poverty and income inequality.

"Now think about your two top issues," I ask them. "Do you think there's any chance--not a high chance, not even a 50 percent chance, but any significant chance whatsoever--that this system, our American capitalist system and the two-party political structure that supports it, will impact either one of those two issues?"

I reset for clarity. "Do you think you will see any improvement, on even one of those two problems, in your lifetime?" I ask for a show of hands. "Raise your hand if you have any faith, any optimism at all."

Depending on the city, between 10 and 30 percent of my audiences raise their hands.

Bear in mind, these are Ted Rall readers. Few if any voted for John McCain. So when the man they did vote for urges Americans of all political stripes "to stick with me, you can't lose heart," as he did in Madison recently, he's wasting his time.

According to the latest Gallup poll 54 percent of Americans expect the economy to be the same or worse by this time next year.

If you're one of those 54 percent of Americans (or 70 to 90 percent of Ted Rall fans) who see the government as unwilling and/or unable to alleviate their suffering, what should you do?

In my "Anti-American Manifesto" I argue that the time has come to stop putting up with a regime so incompetent that it can't protect us from 19 clowns with boxcutters, who are allowed to fly around the nation's airspace for two and a half hours because our military prioritizes killing Muslims over defending the United States. I say that it's insane for the citizens of the richest nation in history to watch their living standards shrink while lawless corporations and a tiny cabal of ultrarich pigs feed off the public trough. Why should we accept a \$1.4 trillion handout to wealthy bankers, while the unemployed are told to pack up their children and get out of their homes?

If you don't think the government will do anything for you, why not get rid of it?

There is one logical answer: because it could be reformed. Well? Could it?

Barack Obama is living proof that it cannot, that the system is broken beyond repair. Because, like him or not, this system is never going to give us a better president. We will not end up with a smarter, more well-intentioned person in charge. He's the best they've got.

Unfortunately, as we've seen since he took office almost two years ago, he's not good enough. As I wrote in my book, there's only one difference between Bush's policies and Obama's: opposition. Under Bush, there was a semblance of a Left.

So now Americans are faced with a choice. They can accept that nothing will ever get better, watch the rich get richer while they get poorer, sit on their butts as the planet heats up and the coral reefs die off.

Or they can act.

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Ted Rall is the author of "[The Anti-American Manifesto](#)," now in stores. His website is tedrall.com.

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As Western Civilization Lies Dying

by John Kozy [article link](#)

September 29, 2010 | Global Research

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:44 AM](#) [0 comments](#) 

Progressives March to Washington for Jobs, Justice and Education on Saturday

Progressives March to Washington for Jobs, Justice and Education on Saturday

By Benjamin Todd Jealous and Deepak Bhargava [article link](#)

September 30, 2010 | The Nation | AlterNet

For nearly two years, the loudest and most insistent voices in American politics have been on the extreme right.

That is going to change. No longer will we allow a noisy and vocal fringe hijack the definition of “patriot.” No longer will we sit idly while right-wing extremists seek to turn back America’s clock to a past of fear and intimidation. No longer will we watch self proclaimed “real Americans” usurp the will and desire of the real mainstream, the American majority. Simply put, we’ve come too far, overcome too much, to not make our voices heard.

On October 2, 2010, the people of America will come together in Washington, DC, to denounce the cynical politics of distraction and division, and rally around real solutions for our country's problems. Under the banner of "[One Nation, Working Together](#)," a broad and diverse coalition will march together: for jobs, quality education and justice. We are marching for all Americans.

The creation of jobs, and most importantly, a living wage, are especially urgent. Jobs are what we need to speed relief and offer opportunity and dignity to working families. Among organizers, the demonstration has already picked up a telling nickname: The Million Jobs March.

This is, in many ways, a fitting title. Wall Street's reckless gambling cost Main Street 8 million jobs. Job losses on that scale have left a gaping hole in the fabric of our country. Until we close that hole, our economy and our politics will continue to unravel.

Instead of contributing to solutions or offering ideas on how to improve the economy, there are those who seek to further the divide and widen the political abyss. A caucus of xenophobic immigration opponents, conspiracy theorists and enemies of reform, among others, have banded together to wage war on the public dialogue, camouflaging their minority views in the cloak of patriotism, undermining and attacking any and all who are not true to the misguided "faith."

Fortunately, Representative George Miller of California and Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio have a strong proposal to create one million jobs right away. A million more workers will go out and make new purchases, boosting business confidence, investment and hiring—leading to more jobs. A positive, upward cycle like this is the only available mechanism for growing our way out of the federal budget deficit. Only a growing economy can generate the tax revenues that can begin eliminating the budget shortfall.

In other words: we should be investing in rebuilding America, thereby helping to close the jobs gap, which will then help close the budget gap.

Instead, as we careen toward a possible double-dip recession and a second round of devastating home foreclosures, the extreme right-wing media machine is desperately trying to discredit the idea that America's government can and should move aggressively to create more jobs. To the contrary, we hear incessant warnings about an imminent collapse, the ruin of the Republic, if we don't take drastic and desperate measures to slash federal spending to the bone and marrow. An army of "experts" is on TV all day sounding the alarm bells, warning of economic doom and screaming "the sky is falling."

Pardon us. Nothing they say should persuade our leaders to throw America's working families under the bus. We are in the middle of the biggest economic crisis in half a century. Through its negligence and recklessness, Wall Street has already forced a brutal austerity program on Main Street. The role of America's government is to mitigate its effects and reverse the damage, not to make things worse by heaping suffering on top of suffering. This is not the time to abandon schools, shut down clinics, ignore crumbling infrastructure and forego job creation. This is not the time to take more away from families and communities that are already losing so much. We don't need a public austerity program on top of the private sector—imposed austerity that we are already enduring.

But some members of Congress apparently think they should focus on closing the federal budget gap, even if it means letting millions more American families tumble. They are mistaken. America's workers find themselves in a deep hole. You don't cut your way out of a hole. You grow your way out of a hole. We can afford to invest more in America's long-term success. We are the wealthiest nation in the world. We should not be giving billions of dollars to companies like Halliburton abroad, while closing hospitals at home.

The administration has offered some important initiatives—greater investment in states and local government, the extension of unemployment benefits. Yet even those attempts to help working families has been met by a solid chorus of No from the obstructionists in the Senate.

For all people of good will, dealing with jobs is not only vital for our economy, it is essential for our national identity. The underlying economic anxiety is fueling a dangerous, extremist fringe in our society and giving it a broader base from which to recruit. A jobs agenda will help calm the waters. If we want to pull America back together, we need to first focus on putting America back to work.

We want those 8 million jobs back. We want a country that advances a diverse, quality educational system. We need a government that practices justice, whether its passing comprehensive immigration reform or fixing a broken criminal justice system that incarcerates more people than any other nation in the world. This is no time for timidity. October 2 will mark an important transition point. Among all Americans the microphone must pass from Beltway insiders making excuses to belt-tightening families making demands. We know that when we come together we can win whether passing health care reform that will bring health care to 32 million Americans or broadening anti-hate crime statutes. The marching of thousands of feet will symbolize a new urgency and visibility from those that believe that a better America is possible.

In the body politic, the American people finally will be able to choose between two movements: one that wants to demagogue problems and divide us, and another that wants to promote solutions and unite America.

[Please join us.](#)

Benjamin Todd Jealous is the President and CEO of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#). **Deepak Bhargava** is executive director of the [Center for Community Change](#).

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:36 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Thursday, September 30, 2010

The Center For Balance: The Capitalist Commandments

Pledge To The USA

The Capitalist Commandments

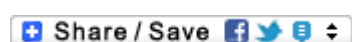
By The Center For Balance [article link](#)

September 29, 2010 | Information Clearing House

1. Do unto others before they do it unto you. Beggar thy neighbor and trade their employments without offset, tariff, or compensation to secure a bountiful profit from the greater slave. Engage the most authoritarian of regimes and let no morality, nor powers of the vast majority, interfere with the greater profits to be had from preserving disparities and all the powers of predation enjoyed by the rich.
2. In all things, see that your capital-defined Efficiency shall remain the only god, and let no morality, freedom nor ecological concern interfere with your divine right to profit and enclose and privatize for your benefit.
3. Thou shalt make money and power thy only god and pursuit, and not suffer any foolish idleness opening one to other occupations or dangerous revelations.
4. To secure thy power, thou shalt not let the people own or control their central banks - despite constitutional purse powers to the contrary - for debt money is the central power and motive force before which all others pale and remain impotent.
5. Thou shalt own and control all media and news dissemination agencies. Let not any editor be elected lest the people influence what they see, hear and read. Let all books, media, and education grow our values exclusively. Let not any fairness doctrine nor any notion of labor-capital "factor" balance interfere with this, our grand design.
6. In all things, thou shalt make Growth and per-capita ruin thy only gods, and defeat Balance at every turn. Thou shalt see that humanity endlessly multiplies. Let no balance of population arise which might serve to pass on the same quantum of freedom, earthly space, natural right and pleasure even to thine own children - as this would destroy our precious and profitable Growth.
7. In all things, thou shalt resist Balance, and both factor and gender equity for I, your male Sky God, have told you so.
8. Let no free commune or cooperative emerge, nor any non-profit venture succeed - for such competition is to be feared and prohibited. Privatize everything as it is your right . Control the reigns of power so the vast majority own no debt-free estate, nor access any means with which they might secure their domestic freedom, independence, and democracy.
9. Let Nature's realm be conquered and set to your profit purposes. Patent and own all of nature's pharmacopeia. Change the nature of animals and humans alike to serve your ends. Render off limits those fertile lands and plants by which the masses might enjoy leisure, acquire natural freedom, secure refuge from our Free Market, or stumble upon any revelations of a non-egoic, cooperative, and spiritual nature.
10. Let enclosure reign, for the landless and dependent are fodder for thy greater objectives. Let our Interdependency forever be mediated by the rich and powerful, and secured in the name of an Efficiency serving our ends alone. Seek to destroy any remnants of natural freedom, commonwealth, and domestic independence. Let our Free Market of neo-slavery prevail and thy will profit beyond one's wildest dreams.

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Steven Hill: The China Superpower Hoax

The China Superpower Hoax

By Steven Hill [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 23, 2010 Truthdig | AlterNet

China must have the best public relations maestros in the world. How else would a country with a lower per capita income than Iran, Mexico and Kazakhstan, one of the worst environmental records of any major nation, endemic corruption, jails stuffed with dissenters, and a dictatorship, besides, be hailed by so many as the next global superpower?

Certainly China is big—1.3 billion people big, a fifth of the global population. As Forbes' columnist John Lee has written, China has long been the place for the world's biggest anything: the Great Wall, the 2008 Olympics, Tiananmen Square, the South China Mall in Dongguan, dams, consumption of cement and production of automobiles; most recently, China even had the world's biggest traffic jam—an incredible 60 miles long—which lasted a month and during which drivers were stuck in their cars for days at a time.

The world has never see anything like mega-nations the size of China (or India for that matter), and no one even knows if populations of this magnitude ultimately are sustainable. China's voracious need to supply its population and avoid the social explosions that have plagued its history has made it one of the world's largest consumers of natural resources, especially timber and energy, extracted from places like Africa, Southeast Asia and South America. With such large appetites, China has the ability to drive global markets, and, consequently, has become the new frontier where "get rich quick" investors and Western businesses go panning for gold by speculating in some hot Chinese start-up.

Unfortunately, the hype ignores a starker reality—that China is barely holding it together. Contrarian voices like Hu Ping, the chief editor of Beijing Spring, a pro-human rights and democracy journal, try to humanize the conventional wisdom of economic statistics and facts that obscure reality. "With China portrayed in the news every day as an economic and political powerhouse, the rest of the world, at least those parts that treasure freedom and peace, should pay attention to the real China," says Hu.

The Paradox of China

To understand the "real" China, it is necessary to see it through the double lens of its paradoxical condition as both a major economy and a still-developing country. China is filled with contradictions and serious challenges. When I visited China in August and September of 2008, after the Olympics, the country that I saw, whether in Shanghai, Beijing or the rural areas, was a long, long way from being a global leader in any meaningful sense. Two hundred million people out of a working population of nearly 800 million are migrants, chafing at their lowly status and rotten wages. Inequality is rampant. Returning from the rural areas—where the vast majority of Chinese still live—to cities is like a form of time travel, moving from feudal conditions where plowing is still done by water buffalo to a land of impressively jutting skyscrapers. Corruption is epidemic, whether in banks, the legal system or the political leadership at national, provincial and local levels, causing an estimated annual economic loss of approximately 15 percent of GDP, according to economist Hu Angang.

Even China's much-touted economic power has been misunderstood. Recently it was announced around the world that China had surpassed Japan to become the second-largest national economy. But compared to the United States and Europe, China is still an economic mini-me. Europe's gross domestic product is \$17.5 trillion, according to the latest IMF figures, while the U.S. figure is \$14.8 trillion and China's is \$5.4 trillion (by Europe, I mean the EU 27 plus Norway, Switzerland and Iceland).

Beyond economic output, more than three-fifths of China's overall exports and nearly all its high-tech exports are made by non-Chinese, foreign companies. Foreign companies take advantage of low Chinese wages to reprocess imports of semi-manufactured goods that are then shipped to Europe and the U.S. China remains, in essence, a subcontractor to the West,

says Will Hutton, British political analyst and author of an influential book on China, “The Writing on the Wall.” Despite China’s export success, there are few great Chinese brands or companies. China needs to build them, says Hutton, but doing that in a one-party authoritarian state, where the party second-guesses business strategy for ideological and political ends, is impossible.”

Because of China’s climate of corruption and authoritarian secrecy, even the volume of industrial output has been questioned. Some doubt China’s numbers and official reports. Investment guru [James Chanos](#), who rose to prominence when he predicted the Enron meltdown (and pocketed a billion dollars shorting Enron stock), is shorting China now.

Says Chanos, “China is cooking its books. State-run companies are buying fleets of cars and storing them in parking lots and warehouses” to pump up state-mandated production figures. As evidence of this, experts point out that while car sales have been rising by a huge 20 percent per month, auto fuel usage seems to be rising by only 3-5 percent per month. Chanos also says China is plagued by an ominously growing real estate bubble in high-rise buildings, offices and condos. Much of China’s high growth originally came from decades-long heavy investment in infrastructure, but increasingly it has been coming from construction. Chanos estimates that 50 percent to 60 percent of China’s GDP now comes from alarming levels of overbuilding, virtually none of which is affordable to the average Chinese. “This is not affordable housing for the middle class; this is high-end condos in major urban areas and high-end office buildings, which no one is buying,” says Chanos.

China is on this “treadmill to hell,” he says, because so much of its GDP growth comes from construction which can’t be sustained. If China were to slow down the construction industry, its GDP growth would go negative very quickly.

“That’s not going to happen, because in China people are rewarded at almost every level of government for making their economic growth numbers. The easiest way to do that is put up another building. They’re really hooked on this sort of heroin of real estate development to keep the numbers going,” Chanos says.

Sino enthusiasts are betting that China’s rulers, whom they see as having been competent stewards of a growing economy for decades, have the means to slowly let the air out of the bubble and avert disaster. But with entire building complexes—urban forests of office and condo high-rises—standing empty in China, Chanos and others are predicting a housing market crash like the one that occurred in the United States.

Walking an Environmental Tightrope Without a Net

The only thing cloudier than China’s economic model is the sky over its major cities, so choked with smog that some days you can’t see the high-rises a few blocks away. During the run-up to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, many were concerned that athletes wouldn’t be able to breathe the foul air. To try to clear the air, the government instituted an odd-even auto policy, i.e. cars with license plates ending in an even number could drive one day, odd numbers the next. People in Beijing told me that the skies had not been so clear in decades (and they were greatly chagrined when the authorities eventually reverted to the previous laissez-faire policy, resulting in unprecedented traffic jams that make India’s look tame by comparison).

Four hundred thousand Chinese die every year of respiratory diseases caused by pollution. About 500 million rural Chinese—equivalent to the population of the entire European Union—still do not have access to safe drinking water. Acid rain, caused by sulfur dioxide emissions that belch from smokestacks of power plants, is endemic, with the state-run China Daily reporting that in Guangdong province—China’s most prosperous region, and also its most industrialized—53 percent of total rainfall in 2008 was acid rain.

Food scares, such as [industrial toxins](#) mixed into milk powder, pet food and cough syrup, have been frequent, and there have been instances of exported toys bearing lead paint and drywall containing highly toxic sulfur compounds that made brand-new homes in the U.S. and elsewhere unlivable.

These consumer dangers are additional manifestations of the amoral, corrupt, robber-baron business practices that have been unleashed in China. The 2008 earthquakes in western Sichuan province, which resulted in the collapse of more than 7,000 schoolrooms and thousands of deaths among schoolchildren, disproportionately impacted the poor who lived in areas

where corruption had resulted in shoddy construction practices. The suicide rate among the elderly in rural areas is four to five times higher than the world average because 90 percent of the elderly have no retirement pension, even as there is a growing shortage of nursing home services, and so many elderly choose to quietly end their lives on a barren hillside or in a forest to avoid being a burden to their children. For all these reasons and more, China is plagued by 70,000 protests per year, many of them more like riots and quite violent (including occasional bombings), and had 300,000 labor disputes in 2006 alone, nearly double the number reported in 2001.

Young men and women I met in the cities had fled the Third World conditions in their farming villages only to accept the yoke of working in sweatshop factories or as bar waitresses, earning just enough to afford a bedroom shared with three others, four to a tiny room, two to a bed. Disposable income was practically nil and life was hard. Education is not a way out for most, since it is not free at any level and university is much too expensive for most young people to afford. The only hope they nurtured was that their country would one day be more affluent and some of that wealth would trickle down their way, as according to the Confucian virtues of “sacrifice” drilled into them by the ruling Communist Party. Recent strikes at factories producing products for Western corporations like Apple, Honda and others have managed to exact sizable wage increases of about 20 percent. But for most Chinese, life is a grim struggle and will remain so for years to come. Walking around China, even with all its tourist charms and ancient curiosities, it is hard to envision a superpower taking shape, no matter how far one peers into the future.

There's Gold in Them China Hills

Welcome to China Inc., this ancient land where the entire country is run like a giant corporation. Certainly the land of “capitalist communism”—an oddball combination, to be sure—has made some impressive gains with its roaring economic growth rates and in lifting several hundred million people out of the abject poverty of the Mao years. Over the past 30 years, China has sustained nearly double-digit growth, a remarkable run which has produced a growing middle class of perhaps 200 million to 300 million people. But an important qualifier is that China started from a very low level of GDP. By 2009, China's per capita GDP still was only \$3,600, compared with \$46,000 in the United States. China's metrics indicate significant challenges for years to come, and considering all its other economic and environmental ills, its past record is no guarantee of future success. Prophecies of its global leadership are premature at best.

Beyond economic and ecological indicators, the hallmark of a great power is when other nations want to emulate you. What made the United States the great power of the post-World War II era was not just its military might but its promise of economic betterment and freedoms—glamorized by Hollywood, the best public relations machine ever—which caused people from all over the world to want to flock to our shores. The City on the Hill inspired people toward an ideal, however much America itself didn't always live up to that ideal. But no one is banging down doors to get into China, and only the poorest countries aim to be like the People's Republic.

China inspires curiosity with its ancient history and huge population, but not envy or emulation. That will not change anytime soon, and perhaps never unless China at some point opens up its political and economic system. The absolute unwillingness of Communist Party authorities to tolerate any public reflection, let alone protest, during the 20-year anniversary in June 2009 of the Tiananmen Square crackdown exposed their great fear of their own people, as well as the lack of confidence among China's rulers in either their system or themselves. It remains to be seen how much of a “new China” will continue to emerge, but all these horizons certainly provide a different view of China from the one typically given by the Sino enthusiasts.

Given this reality, why does China receive so many rave reviews while Japan and Europe—which actually do a far better job of providing for their people—are treated with scorn and derision? The answer seems to boil down to the fact that China's high-growth economy has become the place where corporations can realize the quickest return for their quarterly profit sheets. To many awestruck pundits, China represents the future, or at least the future of business success.

But it is also the case that China's über-growth has become an ideological weapon in the hands of free market fundamentalists and pro-growth zealots. The Chinese economy and its high growth engine is used to browbeat other countries viewed as growing insufficiently. Europe and Japan are proof that high growth is not necessary to create the

highest living standards in the world, yet in an ideological battle between free market fundamentalists and everyone else, China is a useful propaganda tool.

But once you peel back the curtain, as Toto did in “The Wizard of Oz,” the China reality doesn’t live up to Wall Street’s hype. In fact, the hype actually is damaging to China, as it causes members of the U.S. Congress to propose foolish ideas such as protectionist measures, when in reality China needs different forms of assistance—especially technical assistance—from Europe, the U.S. and other developed powers. The entire world has a stake in China succeeding, both economically and in greening its economy and reducing its carbon emissions. The prospect of China as a “failed state” is too terrible to contemplate.

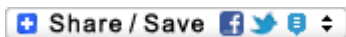
China has come a long way, but it has a long, long way to go. It’s anyone’s bet whether China will sink or swim. So much for superpower status.

Steven Hill is a writer, columnist and political professional based in the United States with two decades of experience in politics. Hill is the author, most recently, of “[Europe’s Promise: Why the European Way Is the Best Hope for an Insecure Age](#),” published in January 2010. His previous books include “[10 Steps to Repair American Democracy](#)” (2006), “[Fixing Elections: The Failure of America’s Winner Take All Politics](#)” (2003) and “[Whose Vote Counts](#)” (with Rob Richie, 2001).

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Wednesday, September 29, 2010

[Tom Eley: The Richest People in America](#)

The Richest People in America

The Forbes 400 List: 2010

by Tom Eley [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 26, 2010 | WSWS | Global Research

While 2010 has seen the vast majority of the US population suffer the consequences of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression—mass joblessness, wage cutting, plummeting home prices, record foreclosures, and spending cuts by near-bankrupt states and cities—for the handful of plutocrats who control the nation’s wealth it has been a very good year indeed.

According to *Forbes* magazine, the net worth of the 400 richest Americans increased by 8 percent in 2010, to \$1.37 trillion, in the year ending August 25. The figure is slightly greater than the entire gross domestic product of India, population 1.2 billion. It is also more than 10 times greater than the \$121 billion combined budget deficit of all 50 states for 2011.

The household wealth for the great majority is going in the opposite direction. Last week, the Federal Reserve revealed that the net worth of all US households and non-profits fell 2.8 percent in the second quarter, to \$53.5 trillion. This means that the richest 400 Americans have about 2.6 percent of the total national household wealth, the other 310 million splitting the remainder.

Though most Americans have experienced nothing of the “recovery” touted by the Obama administration, the extremely rich know different. The wealth level to gain admittance to the Forbes 400 club rose this year back to \$1 billion—after falling last year to \$950 million as the super-rich suffered, in their own particular way, the effects of the financial collapse of 2008.

Year-to-year changes aside, the 2010 list registers a longer-term accumulation of wealth that has been underway for three decades. When *Forbes* first published the Fortune 400 list in 1982, there were “only” 12 billionaires in the US, and the richest American, shipbuilding tycoon Daniel Ludwig, had net wealth estimated at \$2 billion. Adjusting for inflation, Ludwig would wind up 58th on today’s list.

The richest individual in America for the 17th year in a row is Microsoft founder Bill Gates, with a personal fortune estimated at \$54 billion (\$24 billion in 1982 dollars, 12 times the value of Ludwig’s empire that year). Gates’s net worth is equivalent to the GDP of Sudan, population 42 million, and is about \$7 billion more than the amount earmarked by the US government for the Education Department in the 2010 budget.

Gates is followed once again by Warren Buffett, net worth \$45 billion. Buffett has made the list every year since 1982, when he had estimated resources of about \$250 million. The intervening years have been good for the Omaha investment tycoon, his wealth increasing by a factor of 180.

As in other recent editions of the Forbes list, the virtual absence of billionaires whose fortunes are derived from manufacturing is striking. One exception is 85-year-old William Ford, Sr., whose net worth of \$1 billion brought him back on the list for the first time in several years. Ford’s wealth increased largely as a result of wage-cutting at his eponymous motor company.

The list offers a glimpse at the socially malignant character of today’s ruling elite and its activities. The great majority of the Forbes 400 have derived their staggering fortunes through one or another type of financial operation, such as hedge funds, private equity firms, real estate, “technology” (mainly through bubble-driven Internet or software ventures), and retail empires.

To be sure, America has always had its “robber barons,” long associated with names like Vanderbilt, Carnegie and Rockefeller. Though they brutally oppressed their workers, their wealth was derived from the building up of enormous industrial empires. Today’s robber barons have instead made their fortunes from the destruction of industry and out-and-out financial swindling unconnected to any productive economic process.

The increased wealth of the Forbes 400 is further evidence that the social crisis—far from giving rise to redistributive or even vaguely reformist policies to alleviate the suffering of the great majority—is being used to further enrich the fabulously wealthy.

Tom Eley is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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Tuesday, September 28, 2010

Chris Hedges: Retribution For A World Lost In Screens

Retribution For A World Lost In Screens

By Chris Hedges [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 27, 2010 | TruthDig | CounterCurrents

Nemesis was the Greek goddess of retribution. She exacted divine punishment on arrogant mortals who believed they could defy the gods, turn themselves into objects of worship and build ruthless systems of power to control the world around them. The price of such hubris was almost always death.

Nemesis, related to the Greek word *némein*, means “to give what is due.” Our nemesis fast approaches. We will get what we are due. The staggering myopia of our corrupt political and economic elite, which plunder the nation’s wealth for financial speculation and endless war, the mass retreat of citizens into virtual hallucinations, the collapsing edifices around us, which include the ecosystem that sustains life, are ignored for a giddy self-worship. We stare into electronic screens just as Narcissus, besotted with his own reflection, stared into a pool of water until he wasted away and died.

We believe that because we have the capacity to wage war we have the right to wage war. We believe that money, rather than manufactured products and goods, is real. We believe in the myth of inevitable human moral and material progress. We believe that no matter how much damage we do to the Earth or our society, science and technology will save us. And as temperatures on the planet steadily rise, as droughts devastate cropland, as the bleaching of coral reefs threatens to wipe out 25 percent of all marine species, as countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh succumb to severe flooding, as we poison our food, air and water, as we refuse to confront our addiction to fossil fuels and coal, as we dismantle our manufacturing base and plunge tens of millions of Americans into a permanent and desperate underclass, we flick on a screen and are entranced.

We confuse the electronic image, a reflection back to us of ourselves, with the divine. We gawk at “reality” television, which of course is contrived reality, reveling in being the viewer and the viewed. True reality is obliterated from our consciousness. It is the electronic image that informs and defines us. It is the image that gives us our identity. It is the image that tells us what is attainable in the vast cult of the self, what we should desire, what we should seek to become and who we are. It is the image that tricks us into thinking we have become powerful—as the popularity of video games built around the themes of violence and war illustrates—while we have become enslaved and impoverished by the corporate state. The electronic image leads us back to the worship of ourselves. It is idolatry. Reality is replaced with electronic mechanisms for preening self-presentation—the core of social networking sites such as Facebook—and the illusion of self-fulfillment and self-empowerment. And in a world unmoored from the real, from human limitations and human potential, we inevitably

embrace superstition and magic. This is what the worship of images is about. We retreat into a dark and irrational fear born out of a cavernous ignorance of the real. We enter an age of technological barbarism.

To those entranced by images, the world is a vast stage on which they are called to enact their dreams. It is a world of constant action, stimulation and personal advancement. It is a world of thrills and momentary ecstasy. It is a world of ceaseless movement. It makes a fetish of competition. It is a world where commercial products and electronic images serve as a pseudo-therapy that caters to feelings of alienation, inadequacy and powerlessness. We may be locked in dead-end jobs, have no meaningful relationships and be confused about our identities, but we can blast our way to power holding a little control panel while looking for hours at a screen. We can ridicule the poor, the ignorant and the weak all day long on trash-talk shows and reality television shows. We are skillfully made to feel that we have a personal relationship, a false communion, with the famous—look at the outpouring of grief at the death of Princess Diana or Michael Jackson. We have never met those we adore. We know only their manufactured image. They appear to us on screens. They are not, at least to us, real people. And yet we worship and seek to emulate them.

In this state of cultural illusion any description of actual reality, because it does not consist of the happy talk that pollutes the airwaves from National Public Radio to Oprah, is dismissed as “negative” or “pessimistic.” The beleaguered Jeremiahs who momentarily stumble into our consciousness and in a desperate frenzy seek to warn us of our impending self-destruction are derided because they do not lay out easy formulas that permit us to drift back into fantasy. We tell ourselves they are overreacting. If reality is a bummer, and if there are no easy solutions, we don’t want to hear about it. The facts of economic and environmental collapse, now incontrovertible, cannot be discussed unless they are turned into joking banter or come accompanied with a neat, pleasing solution, the kind we are fed at the conclusion of the movies, electronic games, talk shows and sitcoms, the kind that dulls our minds into passive and empty receptacles. We have been conditioned by electronic hallucinations to expect happy talk. We demand it.

We confuse this happy talk with hope. But hope is not about a belief in progress. Hope is about protecting simple human decency and demanding justice. Hope is the belief, not necessarily grounded in the tangible, that those whose greed, stupidity and complacency have allowed us to be driven over a cliff shall one day be brought down. Hope is about existing in a perpetual state of rebellion, a constant antagonism to all centers of power. The great moral voices, George Orwell and Albert Camus being perhaps two of the finest examples, describe in moving detail the human suffering we ignore or excuse. They understand that the greatest instrument for moral good is the imagination. The ability to perceive the pain and suffering of another, to feel, as King Lear says, what wretches feel, is a more powerful social corrective than the shelves of turgid religious and philosophical treatises on human will. Those who change the world for the better, who offer us hope, have the capacity to make us step outside of ourselves and feel empathy.

A print-based culture, as writer [Neil Postman](#) pointed out, demands rationality. The sequential, propositional character of the written word fosters what [Walter Ong](#) calls the “analytic management of knowledge.” But our brave new world of images dispenses with these attributes because the images do not require them to be understood. Communication in the image-based culture is not about knowledge. It is about the corporate manipulation of emotions, something logic, order, nuance and context protect us against. Thinking, in short, is forbidden. Entertainment and spectacle have become the aim of all human endeavors, including politics, which is how Stephen Colbert, playing his television character, can be permitted to testify before the House Judiciary Committee. Campaigns are built around the manufactured personal narratives of candidates, who function as political celebrities, rather than policies or ideas. News reports have become soap operas and mini-dramas revolving around the latest celebrity scandal.

Colleges and universities, which view students as customers and suck obscene tuition payments and loans out of them with the tantalizing promise of high-paying corporate jobs, have transformed themselves into resorts and theme parks. In this new system of education almost no one fails. Students become “brothers” or “sisters” in the atavistic, tribal embrace of eating clubs, fraternities or sororities. School spirit and school branding is paramount. Campus security keeps these isolated enclaves of privilege secure. And 90,000-seat football stadiums, along with their millionaire coaches, dominate the campus. It is moral leprosy.

The role of knowledge and art, as the ancient Greeks understood, is to create *ekstasis*, which means standing outside one's self to give our individual life and struggle meaning and perspective. The role of art and scholarship is to transform us as individuals, not entertain us as a group. It is to nurture this capacity for understanding and empathy. Art and scholarship allow us to see the underlying structures and assumptions used to manipulate and control us. And this is why art, like intellectual endeavor, is feared by the corporate elite as subversive. This is why corporations have used their money to deform universities into vocational schools that spit out blinkered and illiterate systems managers. This is why the humanities are withering away.

The vast stage of entertainment that envelops our culture is intended to impart the opposite of *ekstasis*. Mass entertainment plays to the basest and crudest instincts of the crowd. It conditions us to have the same aspirations and desires. It forces us to speak in the same dead clichés and slogans. It homogenizes human experience. It wallows in a cloying nostalgia and sentimentalism that foster historical amnesia. It turns the Other into a cartoon or a stereotype. It prohibits empathy because it prohibits understanding. It denies human singularity and uniqueness. It assures us that we all have within us the ability, talent or luck to become famous and rich. It forms us into a lowing and compliant herd. We have been conditioned to believe—defying all the great moral and philosophical writers from Socrates to Orwell—that the aim of life is not to understand but to be entertained. If we do not shake ourselves awake from our electronic hallucinations and defy the elites who are ruining the country and trashing the planet we will experience the awful and deadly retribution of the gods.

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Chris Hedges, whose column is published Mondays on Truthdig, spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans. He has reported from more than 50 countries and has worked for The Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, The Dallas Morning News and The New York Times, for which he was a foreign correspondent for 15 years.

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[Shamus Cooke: How Corporations Own Congress](#)

How Corporations Own Congress

By Shamus Cooke [article link](#)

September 26, 2010 | Information Clearing House

With the November elections quickly approaching, the majority of Americans will be thinking one thing: "Who cares?" This apathy isn't due to ignorance, as some accuse. Rather, working people's disinterest in the two party system implies intelligence: millions of people understand that both the Democrats and Republicans will not represent their interests in Congress.

This begs the question: Whom does the two party system work for? The answer was recently given by the mainstream *The New York Times*, who gave the nation an insiders peek on how corporations "lobby" (buy) congressmen. The article explains how giant corporations — from Walmart to weapons manufacturers — are planning on shifting their hiring practices for lobbyists, from Democratic to Republican ex-congressmen in preparation for the Republicans gaining seats in the upcoming November elections:

Lobbyists, political consultants and recruiters all say that the going rate for Republicans — particularly current and former House staff members — has risen significantly in just the last few weeks, with salaries beginning at \$300,000 and going as high as \$1million for private sector [corporate lobbyist] positions. (September 9, 2010)

Congressmen who have recently retired make the perfect lobbyists: they still have good friends in Congress, with many of these friends owing them political favors; they have connections to foreign Presidents and Kings; and they also have celebrity status that gives good PR to the corporations.

Often, these congressmen have done favors for the corporation that is now hiring them, meaning, that the corporations are rewarding the congressmen for services rendered while in office, offering them million dollar lobbyist jobs (or seats on the corporate board of directors) that requires little to no work.

The same *New York Times* article revealed that the pay for 13,000 lobbyists [!] currently bribing Congress is a combined \$3.5 billion. It was also explained how some lobbying firms keep an equal amount of Democrats and Republicans on hand, so they can be prepared for any eventuality in the elections.

This phenomenon is more than a little undemocratic: when millions of people vote for a candidate, the outcomes are quickly manipulated and controlled before the election even happens.

Interestingly, the corporate-directed *Wall Street Journal* wrote a similar article in 2008, as the Democrats had begun to dominate politics in Washington:

Washington's \$3 billion lobbying industry has begun shedding Republican staffers [politicians], snapping up Democratic operatives [politicians] and entire firms, a shift that started even before Tuesday's ballots were counted and Democrat Barack Obama captured the presidency. (November 5, 2008)

This article was appropriately titled “Lobbyists Put Democrats Out Front as Winds Shift.”

The corporate money flows from party to party, so that the same goals are achieved: higher profits for corporations. The sums thrown at these politicians are mind boggling: the *Associated Press* reported that the corporate-orientated Chamber of Commerce spent “... nearly \$190 million since Barack Obama became president in January 2009.” (August 21, 2010)

These numbers explain the "deeper" differences between Democrats and Republicans — money. Each party is a machine that vies for power because this power carries with it vast sums of corporate money. The longer a party is in office and the more connections it makes, the more its net worth to corporations, the more that these rewards can be spread to the different layers of the party. There is indeed a real-life, nasty fight between the Republican and Democratic Parties to dominate this corporate money.

One "interest group" that ex-Congressmen don't work for is labor unions. Unions spend millions of dollars to help get Democrats elected, and millions more is spent trying to get their ear while they're in office.

But unions cannot out-spend the banks; and they can't offer millionaire retirement packages to retired Senators. The corporate retirement plans of Congressmen prove where their minds are while in office, and whose interests are being looked after.

Unions cannot continue to pretend that the Democrats are their "friends.” Labor has very little to show for this dysfunctional, decades-long friendship: union membership continues to shrivel as do jobs, wages and benefits for workers — a losing strategy if ever there was one.

A “lesser of two evils” approach to politics equals evil politicians for labor, no matter who wins. In fact, the lesser-evil Democrats have become increasingly evil over the years, to the point where the party as a whole is more Conservative than the Nixon-era Republicans.

The point has been reached where — in various states — Democratic governors are being endorsed by unions after promising to attack the wages and benefits of public workers!

To get out of this vicious, dead-end cycle, unions could unite their strength to form coalitions that promote independent labor candidates: 100 percent funded by labor to govern 100 percent in the interest of working people. All other roads lead back to the corporate lobbyists.

Shamus Cooke is a social service worker, trade unionist, and writer for Workers Action. He can be reached at portland@workerscompass.org

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The Rejection Of God: The Power Of The State

The Rejection Of God: The Power Of The State

Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

1Sa 8:1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

1Sa 8:2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: [they were] judges in Beersheba. 1Sa

8:3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. 1Sa 8:4

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 1Sa 8:5 And said unto him,

Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 1Sa 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 1Sa 8:7 And the

LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: **for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.** 1Sa 8:8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. 1Sa 8:9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, **and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.**

1Sa 8:10 And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 1Sa 8:11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint [them] for himself, for his chariots, and [to be] his horsemen; and [some] shall run before his chariots. 1Sa 8:12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and [will set them] to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 1Sa 8:13 And he will take your daughters [to be] confectionaries, and [to be] cooks, and [to be] bakers. 1Sa 8:14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, [even] the best [of them], and give [them] to his servants. 1Sa 8:15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 1Sa 8:16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put [them] to his work. 1Sa 8:17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: **and ye shall be his servants.** 1Sa 8:18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. 1Sa 8:19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 1Sa 8:20 That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. 1Sa 8:21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. 1Sa 8:22 And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

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Monday, September 27, 2010

Gary Houser: Nonviolent Resistance or Climate Hell

Nonviolent Resistance or Climate Hell

Climate and Mountaintop Activists Must Unite for a Better World

by Gary Houser [article link](#)

September 27, 2010 | CommonDreams

"The world's top climate scientists are now ringing the alarm bell at a deafening volume because the time to act has virtually passed, yet it is as if the frequency of the chime is beyond the threshold of human hearing". - Clive Hamilton (Professor of Public Ethics, Australian National University)

"Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the State becomes lawless or, which is the same thing, corrupt... Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of humankind." - Mohandes Gandhi

As courageous activists from Appalachia prepare to confront a government seemingly held hostage by the inordinate wealth and influence of fossil fuel based corporations, there is a unique opportunity for alliances to be formed that can build a stronger and more empowered movement. Those same forces engaged in a military style bombing assault on the beautiful and biodiverse mountains of Appalachia now threaten the very foundation of life on earth through an assault on the atmosphere and climate systems that sustain us all. The same corporations rendered blind by their greed to the "collateral damage" known as mountaintop removal are equally oblivious to the climate Hell they are bringing to our planet.

Mountaintop Movement Shows the Way

Those who have travelled to Washington DC to take part in "Appalachia Rising" - the largest protest in history calling for the abolition of this abomination - represent a tremendous breath of fresh air. After years of trying to appeal to policy makers through lawful means, they understand the extent to which government has yielded to the power of the coal industry and have gained the clarity of vision to know that the struggle must now be taken to a higher level. Along with Gandhi and Martin Luther King, they recognize a time has come to put bodies on the line and engage in nonviolent resistance.

Co-opted and Pushed Off the Radar

Those who are working to prevent a climate catastrophe have much to learn from the gut level passion on display at this action. Mountaintop activists are to be praised for not becoming entangled with the mainstream "environmental" groups inside the Beltway that have been seduced into a cynical and disastrous culture of endless compromise and appeasement. With treasuries expanded by a willingness to refrain from confronting corporate power and adopt only the most mild and politically "safe" stances, groups like Environmental Defense Fund have stolen the limelight from genuine grassroots activists and presented themselves to the public as the "voice of environmental protection". With their much larger budgets, such groups have pushed the grassroots activists off of the media radar screen.

The Unique Challenge of Climate Activism

Although both grassroots movements fight a common foe, climate activists are also dealing with another significant challenge not faced by their mountaintop counterparts. The monumental planet-wide devastation that awaits humanity if these corporations are allowed to press the climate system beyond its tipping point is much more difficult to convey to the public. Although the signs of climate breakdown are already appearing, they are not as immediately tangible as images of explosions or moonscapes in West Virginia. What makes the climate threat so uniquely dangerous is that by the time the impacts are in full swing, the tipping point will already have been crossed and the breakdown of life support systems will escalate out of human control.

Already Approaching the Tipping Point

Scientists [warn](#) (pdf) that tipping points are already rapidly approaching. Loss of reflective ice is causing more heat to be absorbed by open water. Ocean acidification is threatening critical organisms in the food chain. Evidence is mounting that an ominous "methane time bomb" is being triggered.

Methane is a greenhouse gas 30 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. In seabeds off the Siberian coast, recent findings confirm that a substantial amount of formerly frozen methane is thawing and entering the atmosphere. According to a [press release](#) by the National Science Foundation: "Methane is leaking from the East Siberian Arctic Shelf into the atmosphere at an alarming rate Release of even a fraction of the methane stored in the shelf could trigger abrupt climate warming."

Compounding this danger are two other factors. As it has already been established that the Arctic area is warming more quickly than the rest of the planet, this thawing is on track to only increase. Secondly, the release of frozen methane sets off a self-perpetuating cycle. The more the Arctic warms, the more methane that is released - which in turn accelerates the warming. A nightmare scenario feared by many tracking the climate emergency appears to be manifesting. (Two recent postings on Common Dreams provide further detail: [here](#) and [here](#))

A "Doomsday Machine" That Cannot Be Stopped

What is clear for those brave enough to not stick their heads in the sand is that we are truly in an emergency. We are heading toward a level of suffering comparable to the worst plagues, mass starvation, and acts of genocide in human history. Though the level of devastation would be comparable to nuclear war, the prognosis for climate breakdown is actually worse. In the case of the former, there is always a hope that sane human leaders will refuse to launch the missiles. When climate tipping points are crossed, there is no such hope. The laws of physics take over and the process of ecosystem breakdown cannot be stopped. In essence, a climate "doomsday machine" is being launched that will operate on its own autonomous and inexorable timeline.

Humanity at a Crossroad

As the hourglass of humanity runs out, the people of the world have failed to mobilize on the level necessary to prevent catastrophe. While scientists remind us of the mass extinction of life already caused by previous climate disruptions, the great bulk of humanity appears to be deaf and proceeding with "business as usual". We stand at a crossroad. We must either recognize and confront the forces in our society driving the destruction and holding us in bondage, or the great experiment known as human civilization may well pass away from the earth.

Reclaiming the Moral High Ground

Three environmental networks that have not been captured by the appeasement culture of DC are [Greenpeace](#), [350.org](#), and [RAN](#). Recently, their leaders issued a [joint statement](#) calling for a strong increase in direct action in response to the collapse of climate legislation. They ask for ideas on how to facilitate this.

History is replete with inspiring examples of movements based on nonviolent resistance. Gandhi used the term "satyagraha" to describe the spiritual power that is emanated when people cling tenaciously to the truth and refuse to let go. Any study of the movements led by Gandhi and Martin Luther King will yield innumerable ways to apply this power.

Rousing examples are already being provided by grassroots activists in places like the UK and Australia. On the very day preceding the Appalachia Rising action, 45 activists associated with [Rising Tide in Australia](#) closed down the largest coal-loading port in the world. In England, large numbers have massed together in "climate camps" to become empowered by group camaraderie and a culture that supports activism, learn how to live sustainably, and nonviolently disrupt climate exchanges, banks, and "business as usual". A 10 minute [video documents](#) a climate camp "convergence" nonviolently blockading a street outside the European Climate Exchange in downtown London. This successful strategy begs to be imported into the U.S. A climate camp should be set up outside Washington DC in order to support a whole series of creative nonviolent actions next spring in the nation's capitol.

The public figure most associated with the climate issue - Al Gore - has already called for young people to commit civil disobedience in opposition to coal power plants. It would be only fair to challenge him to personally take part in that which he encourages others to do. If there was ever a time for Gore to break away from the failed attempt to "reason" and "reach a compromise" with the fossil fuel industry, it is now. It is way past time for him to truly provide leadership in responding to what he calls the "moral imperative" to act.

The Crucible Through Which Humanity Must Pass

The truth is that those of us living within industrial society have become seduced by the power which accrues from the burning of fossil fuels, and entrapped by the destructive consequences. We have created an entire social structure which bows at the altar of fossil fuel and have in essence entered into a massive "Faustian bargain" with the gods of oil and coal.

It is a time of testing, when our moral character must evolve and mature to a higher level, when we must pass through a spiritual crucible and emerge intact on the other side. It is a passing that will find us more whole and more healed as a result, and constitute a great advance for the human species. But if we fail to confront those forces that hold us in bondage, the doomsday clock already set into motion will run out and the destruction we have unleashed will overwhelm us.

Without a Vision, the People Will Perish

At a point when human survival itself is at stake, time rapidly running out, and powerful entrenched forces actively assisting the disintegration, there is an overwhelming need for clarity of vision in the formation of any movement capable of turning back such a juggernaut. Those entities that have positioned themselves to make enormous profit from our addiction will not yield their economic dominance voluntarily. There is a profound and urgent need for spiritual battle, and the most powerful tool we have is nonviolent resistance.

The leadership for this battle will not come from the mainstream supposedly "green" organizations. It will come from those in the grassroots who see the catastrophe approaching and who maintain a clear vision about what will be required to stop it. We must reach out and establish common ground with all whose eyes are open to this need. We must build a united movement that will earn the blessing of future generations rather than their curse.

Gary "Eladiah" Houser is a longtime practitioner of Gandhian nonviolence, author of several commentaries on tipping points, and an activist with [Climate SOS](#) dedicated to expanding the network of those prepared to increase the scale of nonviolent resistance. He can be reached at: mountainmist8@yahoo.com

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Sunday, September 26, 2010

[Bill Van Auken: Obama at the UN: The Arrogant Voice of Imperialism](#)

Obama at the UN: The Arrogant Voice of Imperialism

by Bill Van Auken [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 25, 2010 | World Socialist Web Site | Global Research

President Barack Obama used his speech at the United Nations General Assembly Thursday to defend US wars and state terror abroad and to proclaim that the economic crisis has been resolved thanks to his Wall Street bailout.

The US president received a noticeably tepid response from the assembled UN delegates. While in his first address to the body last year, he was able to pose as a fresh alternative to the crimes carried out by the Bush administration, by now it has become clear to most on the international stage that his administration's policies are largely in continuity with those of its predecessor.

In its tone and its content, the Obama speech was the authentic and arrogant voice of US imperialism.

Parroting remarks delivered by George W. Bush from the same podium, Obama began by invoking September 11, 2001, once again exploiting the terrorist attacks of that day to justify the acts of military aggression committed by both US administrations in the intervening nine years.

In the same breath, he referred to Wall Street's financial meltdown of September 2008, as an event that "devastated American families on Main Street," while "crippling markets and deferring the dreams of millions on every continent."

These two events were presented as the source of the core challenges confronting the US administration. Supposedly in response to the first, the Obama administration has continued and escalated wars in Iraq and Afghanistan-Pakistan, while reaffirming Washington's "right" to carry out unilateral military aggression anywhere on the planet.

In response to the second, the administration continued the massive bailout begun under Bush, committing more than \$12 trillion to propping up the US banks and financial institutions, while holding none of those involved responsible for the criminal forms of speculation practiced on Wall Street.

Obama claimed that the so-called Wall Street reform legislation passed by his administration would ensure "that a crisis like this never happens again." It does nothing of the kind, placing no serious limits on the speculative activities and profitability of the big banks and leaving Wall Street to continue with "business as usual."

"The global economy has been pulled back from the brink of a depression," Obama told his UN audience. This statement flies in the face of the grim conditions confronting working people on every continent. This includes the US itself, where the official unemployment rate remains near 10 percent, the unemployed and underemployed account for 17 percent of the workforce, some 30 million people, and one out of every seven Americans is living below the poverty line.

While profits have returned to pre-crisis levels, the reality is that none of the underlying contradictions that have given rise to the deepest world economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s has been resolved. They have only grown in intensity. The response of the ruling classes throughout the world has been to redouble their attacks on the working class in an attempt to force it to pay for this crisis.

Obama followed his assertion about the economy being pulled back from "the brink" with an even more absurd claim that he would not "rest until these seeds of progress grow into a broader prosperity, not only for all Americans, but for peoples around the globe."

In the US, throughout Europe and in much of the rest of the world, governments are pursuing unprecedented austerity policies that are ripping up basic social rights and dramatically lowering the living standards of working people. Meanwhile, Obama himself spoke before a global poverty summit the day before his speech, warning the world's poorest that Washington was determined to break their cycle of "dependency."

The US president's lies about the economy were followed by the fraudulent claim that the military operations his administration is pursuing abroad are aimed at upholding "our common security."

Obama said that he is "winding down the war in Iraq" and will pull out all of its occupation troops by the end of next year. At the same time, he declared Washington's intention to forge "a lasting partnership with the Iraqi people," by which he means maintaining a US protectorate over the oil-rich country in order to advance the geo-strategic interests of American capitalism.

He said that the drawing down US troops in Iraq had allowed the US military to be “refocused on defeating al Qaeda and denying its affiliates a safe haven” in Afghanistan. This is another lie. US military and intelligence officials acknowledge that there are no more than 100 al Qaeda members in all of Afghanistan. The nearly 100,000 US troops deployed in that country are not combating “terrorism,” but asserting US neo-colonial control in a bid to advance Washington’s quest for hegemony in Central Asia.

In one of the speech’s more chilling passages, Obama bragged that “from South Asia to the Horn of Africa, we are moving toward a more targeted approach” in the war on terror, that did not require “deploying large American armies.” In other words, while constrained in its ability to carry out another major military occupation, US imperialism is pursuing its policies by means of assassinations, drone missile attacks and the deployment of elite killing squads, and has arrogated to itself the right to target and kill its perceived opponents anywhere on the planet.

Obama used the speech to once again threaten Iran. Only days before his appearance at the UN, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered a speech urging elements within the Iranian ruling elite to carry out regime change in the country. He reiterated the vow made in his speech last year that Iran “must be held accountable” for its alleged violations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

At least a quarter of Obama’s address was dedicated to the US-brokered Israeli-Palestinian “peace talks” that appear to be on the brink of yet another breakdown in the face of Israeli intransigence and provocation.

For all the hackneyed rhetoric about the “Holy Land” and “our common humanity,” the Obama administration is pursuing these negotiations as a means of solidifying support among the Arab regimes for its escalating threats of aggression against Iran and to further its domination of the Middle East.

The content of the speech made clear the US administration’s unwavering complicity in Israel’s crimes against the Palestinian people. Obama urged that a limited moratorium declared by the Israeli government be extended beyond September 26, when it is set to expire. He said Israel should do this because it “improved the atmosphere for talks,” not because the entire settlement activity in the Israeli-occupied West Bank is a violation of international law and multiple UN resolutions. In the same breath, the US president asserted that “talks should press on until completed,” presumably regardless of what Israel does.

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has insisted that his government will not extend the moratorium, while Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had initially insisted that his delegation would be forced to walk out if it does not. An ever-pliant servant of Washington, Abbas has since indicated that he might back down on this threat.

The rest of Obama’s remarks on the Israeli-Palestinian question had an Orwellian flavor, in which Israel was presented as the victim. “The slaughter of innocent Israelis is not resistance—it’s injustice,” Obama declared. He made no mention of the slaughter of 1,400 Palestinians in the US-backed siege of Gaza in 2008-2009 or the criminal attack on the Gaza aid flotilla that killed nine Turkish civilians last May. The day the US president spoke, the UN issued a report charging that Israel’s actions were illegal and employed an “unacceptable level of brutality,” meriting war crimes prosecution.

The US president concluded his speech with an exaltation of “democracy” and “human rights,” which again echoed similar language employed by his predecessor, George W. Bush.

In Bush’s case, this phony democratic rhetoric was employed to justify US imperialism’s drive for dominance in the Middle East, where Washington demonstrated its commitment to “human rights” by carrying out mass killings, the detention of tens of thousands without charges or trial, and the infamous acts of torture at Abu Ghraib, Bagram and Guantánamo.

In Obama’s case, the posturing as the global champion of democratic rights is no less contemptible. The target, however, appears to have shifted.

The Council on Foreign Relations, the establishment thinktank that enjoys close ties to the administration and the State Department, spelled this out. Noting Obama's "full-throated endorsement of democracy as the best form of government," it commented: "Yet the appeal of such an idea faces challenges at bodies like the UN. This is not, for example, the future world that Chinese leaders envision."

Indeed, Obama followed his celebration of democracy by calling attention to his upcoming trip to Asia, ticking off the countries he will visit—India, Indonesia, Korea, Japan—and praising each for having promoted "democratic principles in their own way." The itinerary includes the four largest countries that US strategists envision as bulwarks against the expansion of Chinese influence.

On the same day that Obama delivered his speech, the New York Times published a front-page article on the increasingly tense US-China relationship that was clearly based on the perspective of the US administration. The Times reported that "rising frictions between China and its neighbors in recent weeks over security issues have handed the United States an opportunity to reassert itself—one the Obama administration has been keen to take advantage of."

It noted that Washington has inserted itself into territorial disputes between China and Southeast Asian countries, organized provocative joint military exercises with South Korea near Chinese waters and has solidified its alliance with Japan, largely in opposition to China's influence.

Under conditions of rising conflicts between Washington and Beijing over currency and trade relations, Obama's praise for "democracy" at the UN represents a thinly veiled threat of new and far more catastrophic eruptions of American militarism.

Bill Van Auken is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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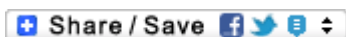
The Collapse of Western Morality

by Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#)
September 23, 2010 | Global Research
Global Research [home page](#)

Black Man Lectures UN Delegates On White Imperialist Foreign Policy

A black American president, backed by Wall Street and serving its investment bankers in cowardly and murderous wars in various innocent Muslim nations, has the balls to lecture the General Assembly on morality.

By Jay Janson [article link](#)
September 24, 2010 | CounterCurrents
CounterCurrents [home page](#)



Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:03 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

Saturday, September 25, 2010

Paul Craig Roberts: It Is Official: The US Is A Police State

It Is Official: The US Is A Police State

by Dr. Paul Craig Roberts [article link](#)

September 25, 2010 | Global Research

On September 24, Jason Ditz reported on [Antiwar.com](#) that “the FBI is confirming that this morning they began a number of raids against the homes of antiwar activists in Illinois, Minneapolis, Michigan, and North Carolina, claiming that they are ‘seeking evidence relating to activities concerning the material support of terrorism.’”

Now we know what Homeland Security (sic) secretary Janet Napolitano meant when she said on September 10: “The old view that ‘if we fight the terrorists abroad, we won’t have to fight them here’ is just that--the old view.” The new view, Napolitano said, is “to counter violent extremism right here at home.”

“Violent extremism” is one of those undefined police state terms that will mean whatever the government wants it to mean. In this morning’s FBI’s foray into the homes of American citizens of conscience, it means antiwar activists, whose activities are equated with “the material support of terrorism,” just as conservatives equated Vietnam era anti-war protesters with giving material support to communism.

Anti-war activist Mick Kelly whose home was raided, sees the FBI raids as harassment to intimidate those who organize war protests. I wonder if Kelly is under-estimating the threat. The FBI’s own words clearly indicate that the federal police agency and the judges who signed the warrants do not regard antiwar protesters as Americans exercising their Constitutional rights, but as unpatriotic elements offering material support to terrorism.

“Material support” is another of those undefined police state terms. In this context the term means that Americans who fail to believe their government’s lies and instead protest its policies, are supporting their government’s declared enemies and, thus, are not exercising their civil liberties but committing treason.

As this initial FBI foray is a softening up move to get the public accustomed to the idea that the real terrorists are their fellow citizens here at home, Kelly will get off this time. But next time the FBI will find emails on his computer from a “terrorist group” set up by the CIA that will incriminate him. Under the practices put in place by the Bush and Obama regimes, and approved by corrupt federal judges, protesters who have been compromised by fake terrorist groups can be declared “enemy combatants” and sent off to Egypt, Poland, or some other corrupt American puppet state--Canada perhaps--to be tortured until confession is forthcoming that antiwar protesters and, indeed, every critic of the US government, are on Osama bin Laden’s payroll.

Almost every Republican and conservative and, indeed, the majority of Americans will fall for this, only to find, later, that it is subversive to complain that their Social Security was cut in the interest of the war against Iran or some other demonized entity, or that they couldn’t have a Medicare operation because the wars in Central Asia and South America required the money.

Americans are the most gullible people who ever existed. They tend to support the government instead of the Constitution, and almost every Republican and conservative regards civil liberty as a coddling device that encourages criminals and terrorists.

The US media, highly concentrated in violation of the American principle of a diverse and independent media, will lend its support to the witch hunts that will close down all protests and independent thought in the US over the next few years. As the Nazi leader Joseph Goebbels said, “think of the press as a great keyboard on which the Government can play.”

An American Police State was inevitable once Americans let “their” government get away with 9/11. Americans are too gullible, too uneducated, and too jingoistic to remain a free people. As another Nazi leader Herman Goering said, “ The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. Tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peace-makers for lack of patriotism and for exposing the country to danger.”

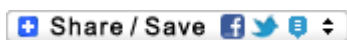
This is precisely what the Bush and Obama regimes have done. America, as people of my generation knew it, no longer exists.

Paul Craig Roberts is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Dr. Roberts was appointed Assistant Secretary of the US Treasury by President Ronald Reagan. He served in the Congressional Staff of the House and Senate. He was Associate Editor and Columnist for the Wall Street Journal, columnist for Business Week, the Scripps Howard News Service, Creators Syndicate, and for major newspapers in France and Italy. He was Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, for 24 years and occupied the William E. Simon chair of Political Economy in the Center for Strategic and International Affairs, Georgetown University for 12 years. Dr. Roberts has also had academic appointments at Virginia Tech, Tulane University, University of New Mexico, and George Mason University. He was a member of Merton College, Oxford University, during 1963-65. In 1969 he presented a Special University Lecture to the faculty and student body of Oxford University. He was awarded the US Treasury’s Silver Medal in 1982 and the French Legion of Honor in 1987.

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Posted by mammonmessiah at [9:14 AM](#) [0 comments](#)

David Michael Green: The Dismantling of Civilized Society

The Dismantling of Civilized Society

by David Michael Green [article link](#)

September 25, 2010 | CommonDreams

How stupid are you?

I mean, let's just face it, shall we? That is precisely the question the right has been asking the American public for thirty years (and more) now. And that is the question the American public has been enthusiastically answering for the same period of time.

Like a crack junkie, in fact.

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan presented America with a set of economic lies so transparent that even a monster like George H. W. Bush called them "voodoo economics". When he was contesting Reagan for the Republican nomination, that is. Once Bush had lost it, and when he wanted to be added to the ticket as the Vice Presidential nominee, everything became hunky dory, and no more voodoo critiques were uttered. That was one of the greatest acts of treason (I choose my words carefully) in American history.

But back to Reagan. "Watch this", he said. "I'm gonna slash taxes, especially for the rich, spend huge sums on 'defense', and balance the budget at the same time".

Okay, so he wasn't a math major in college. Two out of three ain't bad, though, eh? Well, it is if you have to pay for his 'mistakes', plus interest, as so many of us continue to do to this day. Prolly not a big problem, though. Even though Americans hate taxes with the passion of the truly infantile, I'm sure they don't mind working extra hours flipping burgers each week to pay for the enrichment of the previous generation of plutocrats and defense contractors. Right?

Or maybe it's just that their answer to the "How stupid" question is: "Very".

You might think that, because Reagan and Bush actually managed to quadruple the national debt with their little exercise in national folly. Or you might especially think that because Lil' Bush came along with the exact same snake oil a decade later. You had to be stupid to buy it the first time, but you had to have been really stupid to buy it the second time. We, of course, were.

And not just in terms of federal debt, either. A generation of Reaganomics has now succeeded in suspending ninety-eight percent of the country in standard-of-living formaldehyde, so that they felt zero effect whatsoever from the substantial growth in GDP over the last thirty years, and now those policies are cutting off their legs from underneath them altogether. All while the people of Reagan's class, of course, just piled on the riches. How stupid do you have to be to not notice who's diddling you?

Very, of course, but not necessarily as stupid as is maximally possible. 'Cause, guess what? Here they come again. This week Republicans once again have issued a manifesto calling for slashing taxes on billionaires and cutting deficits, all at the same time. And once again they will win big electoral landslide victories in November despite that patent idiocy. Or perhaps because of it.

Why don't they just come out and do magic tricks, instead? Oh wait. That's their Jesus bit. Never mind.

On the one hand, I don't blame Americans for voting for the party that isn't the Democratic Party this fall. Obama and crew are miserable failures, as completely unable to provide meaningful solutions to the problems facing Americans today as they are inept at winning political fights against manifest criminals. Looking at the landscape in front of them as it appears to voters' blinkered vision, it makes perfect sense to desperately swing to the party not in government when the house is on fire and the party in government is showing up with squirt guns. What could be more logical? This is, indeed, the fundamental notion of 'responsible government' itself, and it is at the core of democratic theory.

On the other hand, of course, there are two very excellent reasons why such a vote is completely idiotic. First, because there actually are more than two alternatives to choose from. I wish we had viable third parties in America but I don't normally advocate for them, given the massive systemic improbability of their success. That said, if there was ever a moment for which a third party vote was called for, this is it.

And second, because 'the alternative' to the Democrats are the very folks who put us in these crises to start with, and they are now explicitly devoted to making conditions even worse for ordinary Americans. That's exactly what will happen, of course, and if you think the present moment is grim, wait until you see how much fun the next two years are gonna be. They're gonna look like the mangled and ferocious spawn of a tainted marriage between the Depression politics of the Hoover era, the sick depravity of McCarthyism, the relentless scandal-mongering of the Gingrich era, and the completely unmitigated greed of the Cheney years. Welcome to the dismantling of civilized society in America. Yes, yes, I know - it's quite arguable whether such a beast ever existed. Well, at least that's one debate we're about to put to rest definitively.

And we also know for sure of yet one more thing Ol' W was wrong about. Remember when he said: "There's an old saying in Tennessee - I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee - that says, fool me once, shame on - shame on you. Fool me - You can't get fooled again!"

He shoulda checked with Karl Rove and the rest of his party of predatory shucksters, who seem quite incapable of not constantly trying to fool the public. And he shoulda considered the ridiculous improbability of his own presidency before attempting to quote Pete Townshend. Not to mention the current moment. We know why the GOP has to lie, and does so compulsively. Even in contemporary America, surely the stupidest country on the planet, the homo sapiens are still sentient enough to opt out of the most overt cases of self-immolation. If kleptocratic Republicans told the truth, who in the world would ever vote for them, other than the richest two percent of Americans?

The bigger mystery is why people continue to fall for this crap over and over. This is the "shame on me" concept that Dauphin George was reaching for but couldn't quite grasp (too bad he didn't actually, er, study, when he was at Yale). How many times can fools be told the same foolish line and be fooled into foolishly falling for it, like a pack of so many fools?

It would appear that for Americans, at least, there is no limit, based on the contents of the Republicans' just released "Pledge to America" manifesto, which I could have drafted for them, so predictable is its contents. There is of course, loads of debauchery and rampant destruction in there, dressed up as piety and patriotism. But the fiscal insanity is the most egregious. Can they really pledge the old voodoo economics once again - slashing tax revenue while simultaneously cutting deficits - and get away with it? Yes they can, and yes they have.

Perhaps their lies are more plausible because they have promised to cut spending. It's just that there are two little caveats they hope you won't notice. First, that they somehow miraculously fail to specify in advance of the election what they intend to cut. Gee, I wonder why that is? Could it be that if people knew what those cuts would be they would be aghast? Or could it be - and this brings us to the other small footnote - that what they are proposing is to mathematics what a dropped object falling upward would be to physics?

As Paul Krugman notes, the Republican Pledge claims that "everything must be cut, in ways not specified - 'except for common-sense exceptions for seniors, veterans, and our troops.' In other words, Social Security, Medicare and the defense budget are off-limits. [Krugman should have also mentioned service to the existing debt, which is one of the biggest single items in the federal budget today, and absolutely cannot be touched.] So what's left? Howard Gleckman of the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center has done the math. As he points out, the only way to balance the budget by 2020, while simultaneously (a) making the Bush tax cuts permanent and (b) protecting all the programs Republicans say they won't cut, is to completely abolish the rest of the federal government: 'No more national parks, no more Small Business Administration loans, no more export subsidies, no more N.I.H. No more Medicaid (one-third of its budget pays for long-term care for our parents and others with disabilities). No more child health or child nutrition programs. No more highway construction. No more homeland security. Oh, and no more Congress.'"

And yet - of course - poll data shows that the folks purveying this heap of garbage are about to be swept into office. Meanwhile, city governments are folding their tents across America, slashing all their services entirely, and the GOP is nominating former witches, anti-masturbators, racists, wrestling promoters and every other form of personal screw-up and jive con-artist to be found everywhere killers and thieves congregate.

I'm sorry, but surveying the landscape, it just feels so over now in America. We seem like little more than a popped balloon, with only the faux blustering fart noises of rapid deflation remaining where once there was an empire and once there were truly revolutionary and truly valuable ideas.

It's no accident, either, that the near-complete obsession of the tea party right and their followers is taxes. It's naked greed, it's more infantile than the politics of a kindergarten sandbox, and it's as corrosive as can be. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote "Taxes are what we pay for civilized society". He meant it, too. When he died, he donated his estate to the US government.

What is happening to America today is nothing short of the dismantling of such civilized society. Does anyone think the country is economically better off today than in the 1950s or 1960s? Does anyone seriously think that the Millennial Generation will be better off than their parents? Would anyone seriously bet on America today, as an economic comer? Does anyone think that the next hundred years will be the American century?

There is so much tragedy to this story that it is hard to know where to start. Perhaps the greatest ugliness of the whole affair is the self-inflicted nature of our demise, and, therefore, the complete lack of necessity for all the pain and suffering already endured and the vastly greater amounts still to come. It never had to be this way, which just makes it all the more pathetic.

If there is any silver lining here it is that the hooligans of the right will manifestly fail at governing, which at least opens up the potential for them to be rejected once again.

I will be interested - as a political scientist, not as a citizen - to see what sort of budget proposal Republicans will pass out of the House once they control it. Like Reagan and Bush before them, their numbers cannot possibly jibe. Unlike Reagan and Bush, however, they will have far less luxury to resort to the shell game of grossly irresponsible deficits as a way out of their own lies, having made deficit reduction so overtly the centerpiece of their campaign this year. The freaks of the tea party right don't seem so likely to let them off the hook for another round of campaign lies as they were the last two times out. How's that for an irony? The only prospect of real accountability for these monsters would be coming from the monsters of their own constituency.

But, assuming the GOP can find a way around that problem (perhaps by proposing a draconian pretend budget that they know could never be accepted by congressional Democrats or Obama?), I would expect them to prevail again in 2012. Unless the jobs picture changes radically in 2011 - and no economist that I know of is predicting that - Obama is complete toast. Indeed, he is probably so wounded that we might expect a Democrat or two to challenge him in the primaries for the nomination. Doesn't matter, though. Either way, whoever the Republicans nominate will be the next president.

Which is where I start to get real nervous. Governments that combine a commitment to holding power at all costs with a total absence of real policy solutions and an amoral willingness to do anything to serve their true aspirations are a truly scary prospect. History suggests that the years after 2012 could be the ones during which the wheels finally came off the wagon of what is left of American democracy.

But it could be far worse than that, too, for us and for others. The prospect of a hugely powerful empire lashing out at the rest of the world - whether in rage or seeking domestic diversion - is not a pretty one at all. The Soviet superpower was kind enough to implode rather innocuously. I'm not at all convinced that we yanks would be quite so gracious about doing the same.

I remain haunted to this day by the words of John le Carré, written on the eve of the Bush invasion of Iraq: "America has entered one of its periods of historical madness, but this is the worst I can remember: worse than McCarthyism, worse than the Bay of Pigs and in the long term potentially more disastrous than the Vietnam War".

Sadly, I think he had everything right in his assessment, save for the word "periods". That term implies a temporariness to our condition that might at least make it somehow barely tolerable.

But what if it only gets worse from here?

And let's be honest. Given the nature of the Republicans, the Democrats, the media and the public in America today, how does it not?

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Thomas C. Mountain: Hush Money For Human Rights Watch?

Hush Money For HRW? George Soros And The \$100 Million “Gift”

By Thomas C. Mountain [article link](#)

September 24, 2010 | CounterCurrents

George Soros is a shrewd, ruthless, billionaire Western businessman. Heavy hitters like him just do not give away large sums of money, in this case, \$100 million dollars to [Human Rights Watch](#), out of the goodness of their hearts.

In some circles George Soros is considered to be a financial terrorist, who counts among his latest victims the PIGS family, as in Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain. In the shadowy world of 21st Century finance, George Soros and his ilk can bring nations such as the PIGS to the brink of collapse, with their populations seeing their jobs, pensions and medical care disappearing into the offshore accounts of Soros and his fellow money mongers. This, of course, is nothing new, for Soros has been destabilizing and carrying out regime change for decades going back to his financial attacks on the Malaysian government for having the temerity, for amongst other things, to criticize Israel.

Far more sinister than the financial terror wreaked upon the world by Soros is the political havoc that he has caused under the guise of “democratic elections”. B,R or S its called, buy, rig or steal, George Soros has done it all. Under the code names of the “Orange Revolution”, the “Rose Revolution” and just plain “Unnoticed Revolutions” a long series of electoral coup d’etats have been carried out with the financial support of George Soros, all to often in close cooperation with the CIA.

One of his favorite targets has been the former Soviet Union states, though his electoral crime spree aren't limited to such.

A sovereign nation such as Norway, even if it has troops in Afghanistan, has much less blood on its hands than the likes of George Soros.

So why does HRW take his filthy lucre, all \$100 million worth? To start with, HRW isn't the only human rights group or non governmental organization to do so. For decades now George Soros has been spreading the loot around, buying good will and keeping the inevitable criticism muted or when impossible to silence, feeble and short lived.

All one has to do is go back over the history of George Soros involvement in political crimes and misdemeanors and you will find a serious hush falls over HRW’s coverage of the events.

Can anyone find any serious example of HRW every calling Soros out for his dirty deeds? Or Amnesty International for that matter?

For someone like George Soros, whose wealth puts him far above most of the nations in the world, \$100 million tax deductible dollars is a cheap price to pay for a very effective peace of good public relations, and with the connivance of the corporate media in the west, hush money well spent.

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Friday, September 24, 2010

Ben Dandelion: Howard Zinn's Last Testament to the Immorality of War

Howard Zinn's Last Testament to the Immorality of War

by Ben Dandelion [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 23, 2010 | The Guardian/UK | CommonDreams

Howard Zinn died this year. He is perhaps best known for his [People's History of the United States](#), a book that has featured in The Simpsons and was recommended by Matt Damon's character in the film Good Will Hunting. This book, which offered a view of US history in terms of 500 years of imperialism, colonisation and racism, was less well received academically, with critics calling it polemical and revisionist. Zinn ultimately was an activist and it shone through his academic work as well as his more political essays.

Delivered to the publisher one month before his death, [The Bomb](#) falls into the latter category. In it, Zinn puts two essays side by side, one entitled "Hiroshima, breaking the silence", the other "The bombing of Royan". As a young man eager to be demobbed, Zinn recalls celebrating the dropping of the atomic bomb; it meant the end of a war he did not wish to return to. He had taken part in the bombing of the French town of Royan just three months earlier. The essays revisit that unthinking celebration and desire to follow orders of those months in 1945. Using historical evidence, it also argues that neither mission was necessary and asks what prompted military action that would transcend military logic and moral sensibilities.

Like Zinn, I have changed my mind over the need and glory of war. Leaving Quaker school at 17, I wanted to be a fighter pilot. But travelling the world on my bicycle, I came to the same realisation as Zinn - that there is no "them", but only a global "us". I will gladly say that changing one's mind is not and should not be seen as a sign of weakness, as it so often is for politicians, but of creative reflection. Of course, now that I am a committed pacifist, I hope the changes people make follow the same direction as Zinn and me rather than the other way round - from pacifist to militarist.

However, Zinn is also involved in arguments more complex than a simple pacifist one. He is critical of portrayals of any portion of humanity as "lesser" and rightly points out that only by dehumanising the enemy could strategies such as blanket bombing or the dropping of atomic bombs be perceived as possible by people who also saw themselves as moral. I remember an analysis of the media by the sociologist Christie Davies which explained how humanity could at any point be counted as identified humans, nameless members of a group or statistics, and that their moral status shifted within press coverage depending on the degree of humanity ascribed to them. "Eighteen die in bus crash" constructs the dead as a statistic. So it is with war, where "the enemy" is dehumanised or even demonised to the point where killing them is not perceived as murder, and where there are no longer "innocent" victims, just "dead enemies".

This is a conscious process of state and media which can be seen in the censorship of films documenting the effects of the atomic bombs in the years following the war. Zinn implicitly argues that if we place ourselves into that "enemy" situation and cannot justify the military action proposed, then we are morally at fault. This may end up as a kind of pacifism, but it is one which takes critics on in different ways and asks more pointedly for each proposed action to be examined in a globalising moral light.

In these particular cases - especially the destruction of Royan, which was actually inhabited by allies rather than enemies, Zinn argues that motives of military pride, experimentation of new technology (napalm was used for the first time at Royan) and the desire for revenge outweighed the facts that none of it was strategically necessary - the port was a sideshow which posed no threat to the rapid advance of the allies towards Berlin in June 1945.

That said, the very "evils" that the war was meant to defeat was implicit in the actions of the allies. All of the allied powers had records of colonisation and all had previously invaded other countries for their own good, as they then complained of Germany or Japan doing. All defended their empires against independence movements in the years following 1945. All ultimately carried out military action that killed thousands and thousands of civilians. Blanket bombing in Dresden was described by Churchill as a "heavy raid". At the time, racism in the US underpinned the social system as much as it fuelled

the rhetoric to go to war against Japan and Germany. In this sense too, less happily, "they" were actually just like "us". Yet, the rhetoric of war relies on "them" being seen as lesser.

The Bomb is not an easy book to read in places, given the accounts of the suffering inflicted by the bombings. It is one that will infuriate many. Some will resist its historical analysis, some its collage of arguments in its favour, and some will say Zinn just didn't understand the true nature of the decisions that had to be (and still are) made. What he shows however, is the divide between those in the corridors of power, and those of us who do not really know what is going on and only have their polemic of the necessity of war to go on.

Unfortunately, Zinn's book remains timely and crucial. As a last testimony to a life of scholarship and activism, it serves us well to take his writing seriously.

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Thursday, September 23, 2010

[Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day 1](#)

Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day

Section Seven of Biblical Holy Days

Compiled by: Richard C. Nickels [article link](#)

Introduction

Section Seven of [Biblical Holy Days](#) covers the wonderful Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day. Our purpose is to provide resource material and in-depth instruction for those who already observe these sacred times. The inspiring Fall Holy Days complete God's Master Plan. The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to the Millennium, and the Last Great Day points to the Judgment of all mankind. As with spring festivals, the great fall festivals are often combined in our thinking.

Here is a summary collection of Feast of Tabernacles data:

Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day

We dwell in booths (temporary dwellings) for seven days, to teach us that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth, looking forward to a New Heavens and New Earth wherein dwells righteousness.

More than any other time of the year, we plan to travel (make a pilgrimage) to be with other brethren at the Feast.

The first and last days of the Feast are holy convocations. We expect also to drink in the Almighty's Word all eight days of the festival.

Truly, the Feast of Tabernacles is the most joyous time of the year, the "Season of Our Rejoicing."

FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Feast of Booths *Succoth*

Feast of Ingathering *Aciph*

Pilgrimage Feast *Hag*

Divine Appointment *Moed*

Sabbath (on First Day) *Shabbat*

Holy Convocation (on First Day) *Mikra Kodesh*

"Season of Our Rejoicing," Fall Harvest Festival, Dedication of the Temple, The World To Come, Songs of Degrees (Ascent), Psalms 120 through 134

Isaiah 2:2-4, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Isaiah 11:6, 9, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Revelation 2:26-27, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . ." 5:10, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." 20:4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Zechariah 14:16-19, "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left . . . shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. . . . This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles."

LAST GREAT DAY

The Eighth Day *Yom Sh'meenee*

Divine Appointment *Moed*

Sabbath *Shabbat*

Holy Convocation *Mikra Kodesh*

Solemn Assembly *Azereth*

The Day of the Book, Judgment Day, Great White Throne Judgment

Ezekiel 37:1-10, "The hand of the Lord . . . carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones . . . they were very dry . . . can these bones live? . . . and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

John 7:37-39, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive"

Revelation 20:11-15, "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, . . . And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Revelation 21:3-7, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."

Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day

A Feast of the LORD, an Holy Convocation

Leviticus 23:2, 4, 37, 44, . . . *the feasts of the LORD*, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My feasts These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be *holy convocations* . . . the feasts of the LORD.

A Seven-Day Feast of Dwelling in Booths

Leviticus 23:34, 39-43, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for *seven days* unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an *holy convocation*: ye shall do *no servile work* therein Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs [fruit] of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be *a statute for ever* in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall *dwell in booths seven days*; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths; That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

After Tabernacles is a Separate Feast, the "Last Great Day"

Leviticus 23:36, 39, . . . on the *eighth day* shall be an *holy convocation* unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a *solemn assembly* [margin: "day of restraint"]; and ye shall do no servile work therein . . . on the eighth day shall be a *Sabbath*.

John 7:37, In the *last day*, that *great day* of the feast

One of Three Annual Festival Times, Feast of Ingathering

Exodus 23:14-17, Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto Me in the year . . . the feast of unleavened bread . . . the feast of harvest, the firstfruits [Pentecost] of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field: and the *feast of ingathering*, which is in the end of the [agricultural, civil] year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

Exodus 34:22-23, And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks [after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, verse 18], of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the *feast of ingathering* at the year's end. Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

Leviticus 23:39, Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, **when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land**, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath [Last Great Day also a Harvest Festival].

Deuteronomy 16:13, Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, **after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine**.

Holy Day Offering Commanded Three Times a Year

Deuteronomy 16:16-17, Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the *feast of tabernacles*: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which He hath given thee.

A "Solemn Feast," Yet a Time of Commanded Rejoicing

Deuteronomy 16:13-15, Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days And *thou shalt rejoice* in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a *solemn feast* unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.

Ecclesiastes 10:19, A feast is made for laughter

Proverbs 15:15, . . . he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.

Psalms 42:4, . . . I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

NOTE: The feast is solemn in that it is God's feast and must be kept with reverence and respect. But it is joyous because we are to realize how much God has blessed us and shall bless us, if we remain faithful.

Ecclesiastes 7:2-4, It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of the fools is in the house of mirth.

NOTE: Is this a contradiction with the command to rejoice? NO! Better to mourn all the time than feast all the time, because you consider the end of man, and the meaning of life when you are solemn, not when you are rejoicing. God wants us to be balanced: learn to rejoice properly at the Feast, but also be solemn and consider the true values in life. God says in Jeremiah 16:8-13 (author's paraphrase), "Don't go into the house of feasting [revelry], for those people have forsaken me; I will cause mirth and gladness to cease from them."

Isaiah 30:29, Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One [Rock] of Israel.

Proper Second Tithe Usage Shows Seven Purposes of Feast

Deuteronomy 14:22-27, Thou shalt truly [faithfully] tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year [can't normally save one year's second tithe to the next]. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which He shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn . . . wine . . . oil . . . firstlings . . . **[1] that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.** And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it Then shalt thou turn it into money . . . and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after [rightly desires], for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink . . . and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and **[2] thou shalt rejoice** [another purpose of Feast is to learn how to properly rejoice, how to use God's second tithe properly], thou, and thine household, And the Levite that is within thy gates

Another purpose of the Feast is to remember our exodus from spiritual Egypt, and that the LORD is our God:

Leviticus 23:42-43, Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths, **[3] That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt,** [and that] **[4] I am the LORD your God.**

When Israel came out of Egypt, they dwelt in movable tents, and temporary shelters, showing them the impermanence of their lives during their sojourn in the wilderness. This is a type for us today, showing that we, like Abraham, are sojourners on this earth, Hebrews 11:9-10. We are not now receiving our inheritance. The booths were a type of temporary, fragile, impermanent dwellings, indicating our reliance on God for sustenance and survival. As sojourners, I Peter 2:11, we must learn to hold all things loosely. This is especially difficult in this materialistic age when things seem to control us. When Israel dwelt in tents, they were all equal, rich and poor lived alike. During Tabernacles, all men are equal before God as each one sits in his *sukkah* and considers Him, not his own special status or his own material goods.

Faith in God requires flexibility. We must be able to move when God moves. The tabernacle was a portable structure that could be taken down and put up again in minutes. It was always sensitive to the wind of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, a house is stable and inflexible. During the time of the tabernacle in the wilderness, Israel had personal direct contact with God. When they settled in houses in Israel and built a temple for God to dwell in, they lost the personal touch. Amos 9:11 looks forward to the time when the tabernacle of David will be restored. Revelation 21:3 reminds us that the tabernacle of God will dwell with men. The tabernacle of Israel was portable, but Israel could see the glory of God hovering over them in the pillar of cloud and fire, and could see that God was leading them.

The Feast is designed so that the whole family may rejoice together and may learn to fear and obey God:

Deuteronomy 31:10-13, . . . At the end of every seven years, in the . . . feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, **[5] that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:** And that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land

Thus, another purpose of the Feast shown by the above verses is to bring the family together. See also:

Deuteronomy 16:13-14, Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant

Continuing in verse 14 shows another purpose of the Feast: **[6] to remember "the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates."** How do you remember the Levite, etc? You share your second tithe with them, Deuteronomy 14:26-27. Luke 14:13-14, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Another purpose for keeping the Feast is **[7] to know where is "the place which He shall choose to place His name,"** Deuteronomy 14:23. In Samuel's day it was Shiloh, I Samuel 1:3; Judges 18:31. God later chose Jerusalem, Deuteronomy 12:5; Psalm 78:68; II Chronicles 7:12; but Christ prophesied of a time when Jerusalem would not be the place of worship, John 4:20-21. In the future, Jerusalem will again be chosen, Zechariah 2:12. So where is God's place today for keeping the Feast? The Feast forces us to prove which group is the true Church, for only they will be keeping the Feast at "the place which He shall choose to place His name there."

Tabernacles Signals Beginning of Year of Release

Deuteronomy 31:10, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles

The purpose of the seventh year of release was to alleviate the poor:

Deuteronomy 15:1-18, At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it . . . because it is called the LORD's release Save when [to the end that] there shall be no poor among you For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land. [This principle reminds us that excess second tithe is to be used to help needy brethren attend the Feast, not to help preach the gospel to foreigners, whose debts are not released, verse 3.] And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or . . . woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years: then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee

Law to be Read on Tabernacles Every Seventh Year

Deuteronomy 31:10-13, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger . . . that they may hear, and . . . learn, and fear the LORD . . . to do all the words of this law.

NOTE: Hebrew servants were released in the seventh year, and at the end of the seventh year, all debts among Israel are to be released. Thus at the Feast of Tabernacles ending the seventh year, the whole law written by Moses was read to Israel, Deuteronomy 31:9. The reason God ordered this was to instruct Israel in His laws so they would keep them and be blessed, and not have to go into debt and be released again seven years later. A "clean slate" was started; God wanted them to go the right way.

At the return of the Jews from captivity, on a seventh year Feast of Tabernacles, Ezra read out of the law every day, as a "clean slate" was again started:

Nehemiah 8:18, Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he[Ezra, verse 13] read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according to the manner.

Tabernacles Concludes Tithing Year

Exodus 23:16, . . . the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. [See also Exodus 34:22.]

II Chronicles 31:2-12, And Hezekiah . . . appointed also the king's portion . . . [for] the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, . . . new moons, and . . . set feasts . . . he commanded the people . . . to give the portion [tithe, see Numbers 8:21] of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD . . . they [Israel] also brought in the tithe . . . and laid them by heaps. In the third month [Pentecost, beginning of the harvest] they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month [Feast of Tabernacles] . . . [they] brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully

Special Sacrifices of Tabernacles and Last Great Day

Numbers 29:12-40, And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly: ye shall do no servile work therein.

Burnt Young Yearling

Offerings Bullocks Rams Lambs

1st Day 13 2 14

2nd Day 12 2 14

3rd Day 11 2 14

4th Day 10 2 14

5th Day 9 2 14

6th Day 8 2 14

7th Day 7 2 14

70 14 98 = 182

8th Day 1 1 7

Also on each of the eight days, the meal offering was given, of flour mixed with oil, three tenths ephah flour with one half hin of oil with each bullock, two tenths ephah was one third hin per ram, and one tenth ephah with 1/4 hin per lamb. (See Numbers 15:1-10.) The total of ephahs of flour for all sacrifices is 336 (48 x 7). Also a kid of the goats was offered each day for a sin offering.

Special Psalms Sung During Feast of Tabernacles

(1) The fifteen "songs of degrees," or "songs of ascent," Psalms 120-134, were sung by pilgrims on the way up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast. The Levites sang these psalms as they ascended the 15 steps in the Temple from the court of women to the court of Israel.

(2) The "Hallel (Praise God) Psalms," Psalms 113-118, were also sung during the Feast.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Israel Dwelt in Tabernacles

Hebrews 11:9, By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

Genesis 33:17, And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth [booths].

Exodus 12:37, And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth [their first stopping place]

Exodus 13:20, And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham

A Yearly Feast Kept During Time of the Judges

Judges 21:19, . . . Behold, there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem. [Continuing, verses 20-24, during the Feast, Benjamites caught maidens at Shiloh for their wives.]

Judges 18:31, . . . the house of God was in Shiloh.

I Samuel 1:3 And this man [Elkanah, father of Samuel] went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh.

NOTE: These passages are probably referring to the Feast of Tabernacles.

Solomon Extended Feast During the Temple Dedication

I Kings 8:2-3, 6, 65-66, And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim [Tishri], which is the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark . . . to the most holy place . . . And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed [thanked] the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people. [Parallel passage, II Chronicles 5:3, 7:8-11.]

II Chronicles 8:12-13, Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the LORD . . . according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

NOTE: Purpose of the house for God is to celebrate the feasts of the LORD.

II Chronicles 2:1, 4, And Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD . . . to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him sweet incense . . . and for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This is an ordinance for ever to Israel.

Jeroboam's Counterfeit Feast in the Eighth Month

I Kings 12:32-37, And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month [between October and November], like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar . . . in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel . . .

NOTE: Halloween is a major candidate for an "eighth month" counterfeit festival, since it falls in October (the eighth month of the old Roman calendar, which is close to the eighth month of God's calendar).

Sabbath, Holy Day Pollution Caused Israel's Captivity

Ezekiel 20:12-25, . . . I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness . . . and My Sabbaths they greatly polluted . . . I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; Because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, and had polluted My Sabbaths . . .

NOTE: The word "polluted" is translated from the Hebrew *chalal* or *kalal* (#2490 in Strong's). This word means "to bore, to wound, to dissolve, to profane, to break, to begin (as if by an 'opening wedge')." It is not as strong as the words *chaneph* (#2610), ("polluted with blood," Psalm 106:38) and *tame* (#2930) which means "to be foul, contaminated, defiled greatly, utterly unclean," as a woman defiled by adultery or fornication (e.g., Numbers 5:13).

Chalal in Ezekiel 20 does not mean open defiance or rebellion, not keeping the Sabbaths at all, but it means the wrong kind of obedience, the "in vain do they worship Me" obedience.

An example of the use of *chalal* is Jeremiah 34:12-18. Here God is reminding Israel of the seventh year of release of Hebrew servants. Verses 15-16, They "had done right . . . in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor," as the law required, but now they "turned [tried to get around the law without openly defying it] and polluted [*chalal*] My name, and caused every man his servant . . . whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure [only for a time, in pretended observance of the law], to return, and brought them [again] into subjection [contrary to the law of Deuteronomy 15]"

Because they hadn't proclaimed liberty as they should have, God says, verse 17, " . . . I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth."

Captivity came to Israel for *bending* God's law, especially the "opening wedge" of improper observance of the holy days. They may have "kept" the right day, but they did it *slightly* wrong. They *chalal*-ed the Sabbaths and as a result, went into captivity.

See Numbers 18:26-32 and Exodus 20:25 for another example of *chalal*, referring to a slight deviation from obedience to God's law.

A question for today: Are we *chalal-ing*, polluting, God's annual and weekly Sabbaths?

Returning Jewish Captives Observed Feast of Tabernacles

When the altar was set up:

Ezra 3:1-6, And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem And they set the altar upon his bases . . . and they offered burnt offerings . . . morning and evening. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written . . . [with its] daily burnt offerings From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

After the building of the wall:

Nehemiah 8:13-18, And on the second day [of Tishri, see verse 2] were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month: And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, everyone upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

Haggai's Prophecy Came During Last Day of Tabernacles

Haggai 2:1-9, [the building of the temple began in the 24th day of the sixth month, Haggai 1:14-15.] In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month [Tishri 21], came the word of the LORD by [the hand of] the prophet Haggai, saying . . . be strong, O Zerubbabel . . . be strong, O Joshua, son of . . . the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you . . . My spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; . . . I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former . . . and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

Transfiguration and Feast of Tabernacles

Matthew 16:24-28 to 17:1-13, . . . If any man will come after me, let him deny himself For whosoever will save his life shall lose it For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom. And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John . . . up into an high mountain And was transfigured before them . . . there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him . . . Peter . . . said . . . Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias . . . a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him . . . Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

Jesus Kept Tabernacles and Last Great Day in 30 A.D.

John 7:1-36, . . . Jesus walked in Galilee: for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand . . . [and Jesus said to His brethren] Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for My time is not yet full come But when His brethren were gone up, then went He also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, Where is He? . . . Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught . . . My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself . . . ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not.

John 7:37-39, In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit . . .) [compare with the millennial purifying stream, Ezekiel 47:1-12].

Verses 40-53 show that many believed on Christ for this saying, but the Pharisees tried to take him, and "every man went unto his own house," verse 53. Early the next morning Christ came again to the Temple and taught "all the people" that came to Him. A woman caught in the act of adultery was brought to Him, and Jesus shamed the accusers. He continued teaching, John 8:12, "I am the light of the world." Verse 44, "Ye are of your father the devil," and verse 58, "Before Abraham was, I am." Then they took up stones to kill Jesus, but He went out of the Temple, verse 59.

As He was passing through the crowds, Jesus healed a man born blind, by putting clay and spittle on his eyes and having him wash in the pool of Siloam (9:1-14). It was the Sabbath day when He healed the man, verse 14.

The Last Great Day in A.D. 30 was on the weekly Sabbath. Thus the time of his crying out on the last great day (John 7:37-39), was the beginning, evening, of the last great day. And the incident of the woman caught in adultery, the exhortation to the Pharisees and the healing of the man born blind must have occurred on the daylight portion of the Last Great Day, which was also the weekly Sabbath (John 9:14). See Edersheim's *The Temple* for an explanation of the meaning of what Christ did.

Paul Kept Feast of Tabernacles in 52 A.D.

Acts 18:21, But [Paul] bade them [of Ephesus] farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will.

Feast of Tabernacles Will Be Kept in World Tomorrow

Ezekiel 36:24, 37-38, For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you unto your own land . . . I will increase them [Israel] with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts . . . [Chapter 37 follows, about the dry bones resurrection, of the Last Great Day].

Ezekiel 44:15, 23-24, But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok . . . shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean . . . and they shall keep My laws and My statutes in all Mine assemblies; and *they shall hallow My Sabbaths*.

Ezekiel 45:16-17, 25, All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince of Israel. And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings . . . in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the Sabbaths In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he [the priest, verse 19] do the like in the feast of the seven days

Ezekiel 46:3, 9, Likewise the people of the land shall worship . . . before the LORD in the Sabbaths and in the new moons . . . the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts. . . .

Hosea 12:9, And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

Zechariah 14:16-19, And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Feast Portrays Joyous World Tomorrow

Isaiah 25:6-8, And in this mountain [Zion, where God will reign, Isaiah 24:23 and 2:2-3] shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory . . . wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

Nahum 1:15, Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Feast of Tabernacles Like a Wedding Feast

Judges 14:10-17, . . . and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do . . . the seven days of the feast And she wept before him the seven days, while their [marriage] feast lasted

Genesis 29:22, 23, 27, And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast . . . in the evening [after the marriage ceremony] . . . he took Leah . . . and he [Jacob] went in unto her. . . . Fulfill her week

Matthew 22:2-14, The kingdom of heaven [what the Feast of Tabernacles pictures] is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth His servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage . . . and the wedding was furnished with guests . . . [there was] a man which had not on a wedding garment Bind him hand and foot, . . . and cast him into outer darkness; There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 14:15-24, . . . And they all [that were asked to come] with one consent began to make excuse And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

Revelation 19:7, 9, Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb

Tabernacles Symbolizes Time of "Latter Rain"

Joel 2:23-29, Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and *rejoice* in the LORD your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former [spring] rain, and the latter rain in the first month [of the civil year]. And the floors shall be full of wheat And I will restore . . . that the locust hath eaten And ye shall eat in plenty [Living Bible, verse 28:] After I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out My Spirit upon all of you! Your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams, and your young men see visions. And I will pour out My Spirit even on your slaves . . . [Compare John 7:37-39.]

We must patiently await this time:

James 5:7, Be patient [suffer long] therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

"Latter Rain," God's Spirit, comes from obedience (Acts 5:32):

Deuteronomy 11:13-14, . . . if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments . . . to love the LORD your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the *latter rain*, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

Jeremiah 3:2-3, . . . thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been *no latter rain*; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

How to receive the "latter rain":

Zechariah 10:1, Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

Hosea 10:12, Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground [hardness of heart]: for it is time to seek the LORD, till He come and rain righteousness upon you.

Hosea 6:3, Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD . . . and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain, unto the earth.

Meaning of Dwelling in Tabernacles

Dwelling in tabernacles is a symbol of faith that God will fulfill His promises:

Hebrews 11:8-10, By faith Abraham . . . sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The earthly tabernacle was a type of the heavenly:

Hebrews 8:2, 5, . . . the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man . . . as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount.

Living in tabernacles is a type of being under God's protection in time of trouble and eventually living in God's house.

Psalm 27:4-6, One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me upon a rock [protection in Petra?]. And now [afterwards] shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies . . . therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing . . . praises unto the LORD.

God lives in His tabernacles -- so will we!

Psalm 46:4, There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high.

Psalm 43:3, O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles.

Psalm 84:1-2, 4, 10, How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee. Selah . . . I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Psalm 118:15, The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous . . .

Psalm 61:4, I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever . . .

Psalm 132:7, We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.

In the New Jerusalem, God's tabernacle will be on the earth, and He will dwell with men.

Revelation 3:12, Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall no more go out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name.

Revelation 21:2-3, . . . the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . . the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.

Miscellaneous Aspects of the Feast:

(1) God promises protection of property you leave behind when you go to the feast:

Exodus 34:23-24, . . . neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

(2) "Too far to go" is no excuse for not attending the Feast:

Deuteronomy 14:24-25, And if the way be too long for thee . . . if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God has blessed you: Then shalt thou turn it [second tithe] into money . . . and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose.

You have been asked by the Eternal to come to the Feast. You ought to strive with all your being to go! See our article in this series on "God's Second Tithe."

(3) The Feast of Tabernacles is designed for us to learn the lesson that we must "count the cost" of obeying God. We must be willing to forsake job, relatives, whatever, to keep the Feast.

Luke 14:16-33, . . . A certain man made a great supper [Feast of Tabernacles compared to marriage feast, Matthew 22:2], and bade many . . . And they all with one consent began to make excuse . . . I have bought a piece of ground . . . I have bought five yoke of oxen . . . I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come . . . If any man come to Me, and [love Me less than] . . . his father, and mother, and wife, and children . . . yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple . . . counteth the cost . . . whosoever . . . forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.

(4) Attitude in which you should complete the feast:

I Kings 8:66, On the eighth day he [Solomon] sent the people away: and they blessed [thanked] the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people [see also II Chronicles 7:10].

Proverbs 15:15-16, All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.

New Testament Warns of False Brethren Feasting With Us

II Peter 2:1-2, 10-22, But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways . . . chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government . . . Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery . . . beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices . . . Which have forsaken the right way . . . they allure through the lusts of the flesh . . .

Jude 4, 12, For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . turning the grace of our God unto lasciviousness . . . These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear . . .

God Hated the Way Israel Kept His Feasts

Judges 21:19, 25, . . . a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly . . . In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes. [Comment: we cannot keep the Feast as we wish, but only the way God wants us to.]

Isaiah 1:11-16, To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD . . . When ye come to appear [to be seen] before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity [grief], even the solemn meeting. **Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth:** they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands [in prayer], I will hide Mine eyes from you . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings . . .

NOTE: "Your feasts" does not necessarily mean different feasts than God's feasts, or different times than God's feasts, for Deuteronomy 16:14 shows that "your feast" refers to the Feast of Tabernacles. God doesn't hate His feasts, but the corrupted manner in which some individuals keep His feasts.

Isaiah 5:11-12, Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of His hands. Therefore My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge

Lamentations 1:4, [Living Bible] The roads to Zion mourn, no longer filled with joyous throngs who come to celebrate the Temple feasts; the city gates are silent, her priests groan, her virgins have been dragged away. Bitterly she weeps.

Lamentations 2:6-8, 22, [Living Bible] He has violently broken down His Temple No longer can the people celebrate their holy feasts and Sabbaths. . . the Lord has rejected His own altar [why?] for He despises the false "worship" of His people; He has given their palaces to their enemies, who carouse in the Temple as Israel used to do on days of holy feasts! [Therefore] The Lord determined to destroy Jerusalem You have deliberately called for this destruction . . . [KJV:] so that in the Day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath Mine enemy consumed.

Hosea 2:8-11, For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil Therefore will I return, and take away My corn . . . and My wine . . . I will also cause all her mirth [revelry] to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

Hosea 9:3, 5, They shall not dwell in the LORD's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?

Amos 5:21-24, I hate, I despise your feasts days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies [holy days]. Though ye offer Me burnt offerings, and your meat offerings, I will not accept them Take you away from Me the noise of thy songs But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

Amos 8:10, And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation . . . and the end thereof as a bitter day.

Malachi 2:1-3, 7-10, And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart . . . I will curse your blessings Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it For the priests lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble [fall] at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts . . . ye have not kept My ways, but have been partial [two-faced] in the law . . . why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Zechariah 7:5-14, [The Living Bible] . . . During those seventy years of exile when you fasted and mourned in August and October, were you really in earnest about leaving your sins behind, and coming back to me? No, not at all! And even now in your holy feasts to God, you don't think of Me, but only of the FOOD and FELLOWSHIP and FUN. Long years ago, when Jerusalem was prosperous . . . the prophets warned them that this attitude would surely lead to ruin, as it has [continue to end of chapter].

Our feasts are not to be like those of Babylon:

Jeremiah 51:37-39, [Living Bible] and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins . . . without a living soul. In their drunken feasts, the men of Babylon roar like lions. And while they lie inflamed with all their wine, I will prepare a different kind of feast for them, and make them drink until they fall unconscious to the floor, to sleep forever, never to waken again

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Thursday, September 23, 2010

Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day 2

Feast of Tabernacles Reference Material

Compiled by: Richard C. Nickels [article link](#)

***Festivals of the Jewish Year*, by Theodor H. Gaster (New York, 1953)**

Also known as the Feast of Booths, Succoth, the Feast of Ingathering, or "the season of our rejoicing," the Feast of Tabernacles begins at the full moon of the seventh month. Like Passover, it is a harvest festival. Just as Passover marks the beginning of the summer dews, Tabernacles begins the season of winter rains. It is the end of the harvest year, harvest home, and the beginning of a new agricultural year.

Booths remind Israel of the time when they wandered through the wilderness on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, as well as being reminders of the Temple, as the First and Second Temples were dedicated during the Feast of Booths. Thus, booths are an earthly type of heavenly tabernacles. They are also symbols of God's continuing protection over His people, like a canopy or pavilion. Through Haggai (2:1-9) God reminded Israel on Tishri 21 to get busy and build His house (tabernacle), stop stealing His tithes, and that the latter Temple would have far more glory than the former. We would do well to heed this warning today.

Jews read Leviticus 22:26 to 23:44; Numbers 29:12-16, and Zechariah 14 on the first and second days of the festival. There is more "Feast of Tabernacles" in Zechariah 14 than verses 16-19. Verse 7, "it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light," emphasizes that although the days are getting shorter (at Feast time) there will come a time when there will be universal twenty-four hour daylight (refer to Exodus 34:22; "at the revolution of the year"). Verse 8 shows the time when there will be living waters in summer and winter. After a long dry summer in Palestine, the winter rains would not come until after Tabernacles. This verse points to the time the whole world will be well watered ("latter rain"). Physically, Tabernacles represents the beginning of the rainy season. This theme is throughout Zechariah 14, verses 8, 17.

On the weekly Sabbath during Tabernacles, Jews read Exodus 33:12 to 34:26 concerning the conclusion of the covenant, and Ezekiel 38:18 to 39:16. The latter passage, about the destruction of Gog and Magog, also shows the Tabernacles theme: Gog is judged with torrential rains and fire (showing that God will judge the wicked by fire, as he did in Noah's day by water), Ezekiel 38:22, 39:6, 39:9. I Kings 8:2-21 (dedication of Solomon's Temple) is also read during Tabernacles.

Last Great Day

The eighth day, "Solemn assembly" or *Azereth*, (Hebrew word meaning "restrain") is an independent festival from Tabernacles. In Deuteronomy 16:8, *Azereth* is applied also to the last Day of Unleavened Bread. It does not mean a day of sadness, but a time of reflection at the end of a joyous festival. The Law is read in a ceremony known as the "Rejoicing in the Law," in which a marriage ceremony is acted out, typifying the marriage of Israel to the Law.

***The Jewish Festivals*, by Hayyim Schauss (Cincinnati, 1938)**

The Feast of Tabernacles known also as the Feast of Ingathering, Feast of Booths, God's Festival, or "The Festival." It is the merriest time of the year, and at no other time of the year did Israelites drink and sing as much as during the fall festival. Sometimes the participants went too far, and Amos, Hosea and Isaiah protested against the bacchanalia of the fall festivals, Amos 5:21-27; Hosea 9:1; Isaiah 28:7-8. But the people, however, paid little attention to their spiritual leaders, and continued to drink and revel at "The Festival."

Tabernacles especially was a festival which involved a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, usually on foot in great caravans or groups of people, banded together to escape robbers (see Psalm 42:4). On the way up to Jerusalem, the "Songs of Degrees (ascent), or Steps," Psalm 120-134, were sung. Isaiah 2:2-4, 56:6-7; Zechariah 8:20-23; and Micah 4:1-3 refer to going to Jerusalem to keep the Feast.

Symbols of Tabernacles are the palm branch, *lulov*, the citron, *esrog*, the myrtle, and willow (See Leviticus 23:40), which emphasize the harvest nature of the Feast.

***A Guide to Succoth*, by Rabbi Isaac N. Fabricant (London, 1958)**

There is a close tie between the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. On the former, spiritual union with God is stressed, and in the latter, physical union with God is the highlight. Together these festivals show that God's law is intended to bring about spiritual and physical union with God and the total joy He wants us to have.

The Feast of Tabernacles shows that God wants us to be joyful, but our physical enjoyment must not be allowed to run wild into abandonment or licentiousness, but be controlled (see Deuteronomy 16:14).

The Tabernacle (*Succah*)

Jews begin building their booth, or *Succah*, on the evening when Atonement ends. This "temporary residence" reminds man of the frailty of human life and the transience of human existence. Psalm 49:6, 11-12 shows the result of those people who are misled to trust in their riches: "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish."

A *Succah* must have plenty of shade, for the word itself is derived from a verb which means "to cover," but enough uncovered to see the stars. Living in the shade signifies confidence in God's protection, with God a pavilion of protection over us (see Psalm 17:8). Shadows also typify the transitory nature of man's life (see Psalm 144:4). A devout Jew utters the following prayer upon entering the *Succah* on the first night of the Festival: "May it be your will, O my God and the God of my fathers, that you may cause your divine presence to dwell amongst us and may you spread the Tabernacle of your peace over us."

The Four Plants

Leviticus 23:40 states: "And ye shall take you on the first day (1) the boughs of goodly trees, (2) branches of palm trees, and (3) boughs of thick trees, and (4) willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days."

Josephus (*Antiquities*) notes that in his day Jews carried branches of myrtle, willows, palm trees and a citron, and waved these during the offering of sacrifices in the Temple with the singing of the Hallel (Psalms 120-134). The palm tree is an Eastern symbol of majesty, and the citron or *ethrog*, of beauty.

These four plants are of differing qualities and are likened to different parts of the body in Jewish literature: the palm, a man's spine; the myrtle branch, his eyes; the willow, his lips; and the citron, his heart. Thus all parts of the body -- God's people -- must be *united* in dedicated service to God: Psalm 35:10, "All my bones ['limbs' in Jewish translation] shall say, LORD, who is like unto you"

The "hoshanahs" which Jews sing during Tabernacles in connection with waving the four plants are reminiscent of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:8-9).

Simhath Torah

The 8th Day is the joyous Climax of the Feast, a time when according to a custom originating in the Babylonian Captivity, the Torah (Book of the Law) is completed after having been read publicly for a year. Thus Jews refer to the Last Great Day as "the Day of the Book" [see Revelation 20:12] or "the day of completion" [of God's plan]. It is a day of *completion and recommencement*.

The reader of the last verses of Deuteronomy is referred to as the "bridegroom of the Law (which is likened to the bride)," and the Last Great Day is likened to a marriage feast.

There is the custom of the blessing of the children on this day, with an adult leading children in reading Genesis 48:16 of Jacob's blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh [compare with the Church of God practice].

Pre-Mosaic Festival?

The Book of Jubilees (composed c. 130 B.C.) states that Abraham was the founder of the custom of the Festival of Succoth. When he came to live in Beersheba, he set up his tents and began a ceremony centered around these tents. "And Abraham built Succoth for himself and his servants in the seventh month, and he was the first to celebrate the festival of Succoth in the Holy Land," (Jubilees 16:26). Thus, Abraham's practice was said to be the inspiration for the Feast of Tabernacles. [See Hebrews 11:8-9, "By faith Abraham . . . sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."]

Genesis 33:16-17 states "So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir [a rough mountain in Idumaea, similar to the word *sair*, "goat, or devil"]. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth [booths]." A Jewish legend holds that Esau represents sin and temptation and Seir stands for goat on the Day of Atonement. When Seir departed, that is, after the Day of Atonement, Jacob came to Succoth to observe the Feast of Tabernacles.

***The Jewish Festivals*, by L.M. Lehrman (London, 1956)**

A famous Rabbi said, "He who despises the festivals has no claim to share in the world to come."

Tabernacles, the most joyous festival, depicts the time Israel marched from Egypt to Mount Sinai and into the wilderness, finally arriving in the Promised Land. Yet the Feast is not celebrated in the time of the Exodus (Nisan, when the weather is mild), but in Tishri, when cold winds begin to blow and drizzling rains begins. To dwell in booths in the spring is no trial of man's faith, but in the fall it means hardship and inconvenience, which shows that hardship is no excuse for lack of faith. Thus the booth is a symbol that we have faith in God as our protector.

The booth is also representative of joyous hospitality. Tradition assigns to each of the seven days of the Feast the visit of a figurative guest: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David.

During Passover, unleavened bread is required to be eaten only on the first night of the seven days of Unleavened bread, providing no *leavened* bread is eaten. But **dwelling in booths is obligatory for seven full days**.

During the first seven days of the Feast, 70 bullocks were sacrificed, which the Talmud interprets this as representing the "70 nations of the world" -- Gentiles. Thus the Feast of Tabernacles emphasizes Gentiles, while the Last Great Day, a special festival of its own, "Israel's *own* festival," in which only one bullock was brought to represent Israel alone.

The Cycle of the Jewish Year, by Yaacov Vainstein (Jerusalem, 1964)

The "Ceremony of Water Drawing" on the close of the first day of the Feast, the Levites, amidst a brilliantly lit court and the sound of harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets, and other musical instruments and singing, walked up the 15 steps that lead from the Court of the men to that of the Women, corresponding to the 15 "songs of degrees," Psalms 120-134. At each step they paused while one of these songs of Degrees was chanted with great enthusiasm. At the Upper Gate, stood two priests, who sounded the Shofar as the singers ascended each step.

The vast congregation was tremendously enthralled as these Psalms were chanted. When the procession reached the eastern gate of the city, they turned to the West, facing the Temple, and proclaimed: "In the days of the First Temple, our fathers who were in this place turned their faces towards the east and worshipped the sun [Ezekiel 8] but as for us, our eyes are turned to the Lord."

At daybreak, the procession left the Temple and proceeded to the Pool of Siloam in a triumphal march. From it, they brought back water to the Temple, which they poured upon the altar along with a libation of wine. This custom, which lasted for six nights, has an obvious connection with the season (which was the beginning of the "latter rains" of the fall). On the eighth day was a special prayer for rain. [In John 7:37-39, Christ on the Last Day referred directly to the ceremony of water drawing.]

The Temple, by Alfred Edersheim (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950)

The most joyous of all festival seasons, the Feast of Tabernacles came at the time of the year when all crops had been stored, all fruits gathered, wine made, and the land only awaited the "latter rain" to prepare it for a new crop. The fall harvest reminded Israel (1) of their dwelling in booths in the wilderness and (2) the final harvest when Israel's mission should be completed, and all nations gathered unto God.

Three things especially marked the Feast of Tabernacles: (1) *Joyous festivities*, with sharing meals with the poor strangers, Levites and homeless; (2) *dwelling in booths* to remind Israel they were "strangers and pilgrims in the earth." The Sadducees understood the "four plants" of Leviticus 23:40, 43 to refer to the materials in which the booths were to be constructed, whereas Pharisees applied it to what the worshipers were to carry in their hands. The latter was the universal practice at the time of Christ; (3) *special sacrificial offerings*.

Three things are worthy of note about the special burnt offerings:

1. They are the characteristic sacrifice of the Feast. Twice the number of rams and lambs are sacrificed at Tabernacles than Unleavened Bread, and five times the number of bullocks.
2. The number of burnt sacrifices, whether taking each kind by itself or all together, is always divisible by the sacred number seven. The number seven is more prominent during this Feast, including the fact that the Feast begins when the seventh moon is full.
3. The daily reduction of the number of bullocks offered. This may show the decreasing sanctity of each successive day of the Feast (common explanation) or that the reason for this is that the bullocks add up to 70, representing the nations of the world (70 Gentile nations), while the one bullock offered on the 8th day represents Israel (Talmud explanation).

Feast of Tabernacles in the Talmud

Jewish Rabbis believe that Sukkot designates the end of the passage of time. That is why they sometimes refer to it as "The Festival of the Future." The mood of the Feast of Tabernacles is totally different than the time of solemn introspection on Trumpets and Atonement. It is a time to be joyful. Some people call the Tabernacles "the Jewish Thanksgiving." A sukkoth emphasizes God's divine protection, that God provides for us supernaturally.

The Hebrew word "Atzeret" may be translated "solemn assembly," "keeping back," "Shutting off" and is the same as "Atzirah." On Shemini Atzeret God says "Ye shall have a shutting off," Numbers 29:35, but Pesach God says, "Shall be a shutting off to the Lord," Deuteronomy 16:8. Why these different expressions? God says to Israel, "On Pesach shut Me off from giving rain unto Israel, but on Shemini Atzeret I shall shut you off, by My rains, from walking in My outdoors." [Rain is injurious after Pesach in Palestine, see I Samuel 12:17]. --Yalkut Hadash, 188b

Said Rabbi Levi: "He who observes the precept of the Sukkah in this world will be rescued by God from all loss and damage." --Otzar Midrashim, page 493

Just as one cannot fulfill his duty on Sukkot unless all four Minim [elements] are held together, by the same token Israel cannot be redeemed unless all Israelites hold together. --Yalkut, 188a

Leviticus 23:40, "And ye shall take unto yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the tree Hadar, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of the myrtletree, and willows of the brook." The palm branch is like the spine, myrtle like the eye, willow like the mouth, Etrog like the heart. With all your limbs praise God. --Yalkut, 188b

It is a custom to draw water at Feast of Tabernacles, representing drawing of Holy Spirit, Isaiah 12:3. Offering of Bullocks on Sukkot: 13 offered the first day, then 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, for a total of 70. But on Shemini Atzeret, only one bullock sacrificed. Seventy were said to atone for the seventy Gentile nations, and the one for Israel. Thus Shemini Atzeret is an intimate feast for Israel only. --Pesikta Buber, page 193, Zohar, iv., 476

Sukkot is a type: you reap and gather produce, so will you enjoy reward in the World-to-come when you reap what you have sown in this life. --Mikrae Kodesh, page 109

Sukkot is especially a time of rejoicing. Scripture enjoins us to rejoice three times; on Shabuot only once, on Pesach not once. On Pesach, neither wheat nor fruit ripe, we know not how harvest will transpire. On Shabuot, wheat has been harvested, but not fruit nor increase in flocks. But on Sukkot, everything has been gathered. --Yalkut Shirmeoni to Emos, 23

Israel was freed on Pesach, "the season of our freedom," but was not united with their father; that was at Sukkot, "the season of our rejoicing." To demonstrate his feeling of freedom, he lives in flimsy hut, not in a stockade or a fortified camp. --Mikrae Kodesh, 151-2

God says to Israel: "My sons, reside in the Sukkah for seven days so that ye may remember the miracles, which I did for you in the desert." --Yalkut Emor, Pesikta Buher, page 189a

Feast of Tabernacles: Dwelling with God

Written by: Gary Sjordal

Why Are We to Dwell in Booths?

Leviticus 23:41-44 says that all Israelites shall dwell in booths. Its purpose is to teach us that God made children of Israel to dwell in booths when He brought them out of Egypt.

Why did God make Israel to dwell in tents? To make them realize that they were not yet dwelling with God, that they had sinned, and that God does not dwell with sin, Exodus 33:1-11. The tabernacle of the congregation was without the camp.

Sin separated Israel from the Holy of Holies, Hebrews 9:1-12.

We dwell in tabernacles to remind us that we are not yet as close to God as we should be. Tabernacles are humble abodes, not palaces.

Hebrews 11, shows that dwelling in tabernacles in humble obedience to God means we are desiring the Holy City, that we are faithfully waiting for it.

Will God Dwell With Us?

Revelation 21:1-7, God's tabernacle will come to this earth, He will dwell with us.

Matthew 16:24, 17:1-13, " . . . it is good for us to be here."

Psalms 122:1, I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the LORD.

Isaiah 2:2-5, Let us go to God's house, joyfully, to learn His ways, be taught to walk in His paths.

Is Israel Inclined to Dwell in Tabernacles?

Nehemiah 8:1-18 shows that Israel hadn't dwelt in booths since the days of Joshua! Not even David, Solomon, Asa, Josiah, Hezekiah had done so.

Haggai 1:1-11 shows that everyone was concerned with living in a ceiled house, there was little concern for God's House.

Hosea 12:8-9 is a prophecy. Rich people of Israel today live in fine houses. God will have to make them dwell in tabernacles.

Look Forward to Dwelling in God's Tabernacle!

Truth leads us to God's tabernacles, Psalm 43:1-5. It is our refuge, Psalm 46:1-11.

We long to dwell in God's tabernacles, Psalm 84:1-12; Full of rejoicing and salvation, Psalm 118:14-15. Let's forget about our houses, but instead, work to build God's house, Psalm 132:1-7, 13-14.

How to Make The Feast More Valuable

1. Get into the Feast of Tabernacles Attitude.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the Millennium -- so everything we do during the Feast is important. Put your mind, heart, taste buds, and body into action and enjoy a taste of the coming one thousand years of peace. This is the Feast of Ingathering -- a time of harvest when God will bring together His People (Leviticus 23:39).

2. Rejoice With Purpose.

We are God's Firstfruits, and we should rejoice during the Festival and enjoy the good things (Deuteronomy 14:26). When we eat a nice meal, we should know why we have it and who gave it to us (Isaiah 25:6). Don't let the mundane and minor things crowd out the real meaning of the Feast. Be sensitive to the needs of the brethren, and give help wherever you see it is needed.

3. Plan to Endure any Inconvenience, as a True Christian Should.

If you can do well during the Feast when wronged, you will learn to be patient with those you must deal with in the millennium (and in everyday life). We must make sure not to offend any of our brethren, especially any "little ones" (Matthew 18:6) during the Feast (or any other time). Let us rejoice and be content (Philippians 4:10-11), and be positive (verse 8).

4. Let Your Light Shine.

Purposely plan to let your light shine during this Feast. Although the gospel can be preached (Matthew 24:14) or published (Mark 13:10), it can also be demonstrated by our example radiating God's Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:16). We should witness that our God exists (Isaiah 43:10), and we, His People should set the example by following Christ's precedent.

5. Get to Know and Love Your Brethren.

If you can't love your brother, how can you love God? (John 15:9-13). It is a joy to love and serve (verse 11), laying down your life as a living sacrifice (verse 13). Go out of your way to meet new people, this could make a big difference to someone.

6. Plan to Learn from Sermons.

Profit from this spiritual feast by listening closely to the sermons, taking adequate notes, and praying for the diligence to follow through and study the subject matter. Prove to yourself from your Bible that the message presented is true.

7. Make This Feast a Turning Point.

If we overcome, we will be pillars in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 3:12). Resolve to get rid of that one big problem you have. If your mind has a wrong attitude get rid of that attitude (Matthew 18:15). If you have a serious "problem" with a brother, go to that person and clear things up (Matthew 18:15).

Summary: Make this Feast an important one!

Feast of Tabernacles and the Millennium

Written by: Gary Sjoldal

After Christ's triumphant return to this earth, and after the release of the captives on the beginning of the Jubilee year, one of the most wonderful events in the history of the earth will occur: the Kingdom of God will be set up on this earth and a thousand-year time of true peace and prosperity will begin.

This is the Millennium, the word taken from the Greek language meaning "1,000."

No More War

How wonderful the reign of Christ will be during the Millennium. There will be peace because all nations will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks [scythes]: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more," Micah 4:3.

There will be no more wasted lives due to war, and the corollaries of war: death, mutilation, deadly chemicals, mental problems, venereal disease, drugs, broken homes, heartache. And even more, there will be no wasting of finances and resources used to kill and maim and cause destruction; rather, there will be positive spending of money to help and heal and promote construction.

Wild Animals Tamed

Not only will people not kill each other in the Millennium, but the nature of animals will be changed so that a lamb and a lion can be together, and a small child can play with all animals without being hurt, Isaiah 11:6-8. This world will be restored to the condition it existed at the time of the Garden of Eden.

There shall no longer be hurt in the Kingdom of God, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," verse 9.

Peaceful Lives

Rather than today's rat race, pollution, crime, violence, and drugs, people will live God's way: "They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree [God approves of private ownership]; and none shall make them afraid . . . all people will walk everyone in the name of . . . the Lord our God for ever and ever," Micah 4:4-5.

Right Government

Who will rule us in the Millennium? "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them . . . and they lived and REIGNED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS," Revelation 20:4.

"And THE KINGDOM and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom . . . shall be given to the people of the SAINTS of the Most High," Daniel 7:27.

"He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron," Revelation 2:26-27.

And the twelve apostles "shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matthew 19:28. These tribes are the descendants of ancient Israel: United States, Canada, Great Britain, Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Christ will be the King of the Kingdom of God. He is "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS . . . He shall rule them [the nations] with a rod of iron," Revelation 19:16, 15.

Those in the first resurrection are very blessed for "they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall REIGN WITH HIM A THOUSAND YEARS," Revelation 20:6.

Fall Feast

There is a saying in our hedonistic society: "Let's Party!" But, there is a better saying: "Let's go to the Feast!" This feast always refers to the Festival of Tabernacles (7 days) followed by the Eighth Day (1 day). The Feast of Tabernacles today is generally observed away from where one normally lives -- away from the stress and anxieties of business, away from the daily routine at home and work, away from noise pollution and traffic jams. It is held in an area where peace, happiness, and harmony prevail -- where fellowship, learning, and spiritual maturity can be achieved.

Temporary Dwellings

The temporary dwellings or booths of the ancient Israelites were built of interwoven branches and boughs. This kind of shelter brought the realization, remembrance and thanksgiving that God was their protector, guide and deliverer, the One who brought them out of Egypt (sin), bondage and oppression, to a physical type of salvation which looked forward to the thousand-year reign of Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Today we can also be thankful and rejoice that we have been delivered from the bondage of sin and death, and are looking forward to the Millennium rest and to spiritual salvation. As we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, the Holy Spirit of God the Father, and Jesus Christ, dwells in us and we dwell with them. This is a far greater and enduring experience than just living for today in a booth of branches and boughs.

The Festival of Tabernacles reminds us that living in temporary dwellings, whether our homes or our own bodies, foreshadows permanent residence and a glorious, immortal body in the Kingdom of God.

The Eighth Day Festival

Written by: Gary Sjordal

A popular belief is that you can only be saved if you hear the name of Jesus Christ. A number of religions have sent missionaries to the Orient, Africa, and various remote places in order to make sure that the "name of Christ" is heard so that the hearer can be saved.

Flat Tire

But, what about the proverbial flat tire on the missionary's car? He fails to reach a certain person who then dies not having heard the name of Christ. Is this poor unfortunate person doomed to hell for all eternity because of a flat tire? Is this how God works?

Or, is God's power beyond the technical limitations that constrain religionists in their quest to save those God probably hasn't even called as yet? What is God's approach to reaching people in order to offer them their chance for salvation?

What about all your friends and relatives who never really knew the truth of God, some of whom may have been bad persons, drug users, criminals, atheists, etc.

Ancient Israel

Early in God's Plan we find Him choosing a special group of people -- the twelve tribes of Israel. These and only these were His Chosen People in the Old Testament. Israel was to be a model nation and people, an example to the rest of the world. Any "strangers" who came into contact with Israel could become Israelites if they would follow the God of Israel, then becoming a part of God's People.

Ancient Israel disobeyed God and failed to keep the Old Covenant, Exodus 19:5-6. But, God said He would make a New Covenant with New Testament Israel, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-11.

Israel in Christ's Time

In early New Testament times, Jesus Christ told the twelve apostles to go first to Israel, Matthew 10:6, and that they would not have gone over the lands of Israel till He was to come again -- sometime in the near future, verse 23. Later, the apostles also went to the Gentiles, but the emphasis was still on Israel. And now Israel was under the New Covenant since God's Holy Spirit was generally available.

God's Chosen People in New Testament times, as well as today, are those whom He calls regardless of whether they are descendants of physical Israel or not, John 6:44. And in fact those who are Christ's become spiritual Israelites, Galatians 3:29.

Modern Israel

Those people God calls today can accept the call, and eventually become a part of God's True Church by receiving God's Holy Spirit, Romans 8:9.

Most of the modern physical descendants of Israel (the Caucasian peoples of the United States, Great Britain, etc.) have turned their backs on God and have ceased to be Model Nations. They will be punished severely, but will eventually be regathered during the Jubilee year after Christ's return to become a righteous people as an example for the rest of the nations of the world.

The Future

But, what about non-Israelites of the past, or Israelites who never even heard the name of Christ? What about the "lost"?

This is the point of the final festival in God's seven-part Plan. This festival represents the time when God will make salvation available to all those who never had a previous chance to choose it.

Great White Throne Judgment

The seventh festival is often called the White Throne Judgment. "And I saw a GREAT WHITE THRONE . . . and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the DEAD WERE JUDGED out of those things which were written in the books, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS," Revelation 20:11-12.

This judgment occurs at the end of the thousand-year Millennium period: " . . . they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," Revelation 20:4-5.

First Resurrection

When Christ returns there will occur what may be called the First Resurrection. Those who will live and reign with Jesus Christ for one thousand years must first be resurrected:

"This is the FIRST RESURRECTION. Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power . . . ," Revelation 20:5-6.

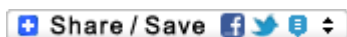
Second Resurrection

The resurrection back to physical human life of all the dead who never had an opportunity for salvation will occur after the Millennium. This is the SECOND RESURRECTION which will be followed by the Great White Throne Judgment.

The Eighth Day Festival shows a time of New Beginning for those who accept salvation (God's way of life) when they are given their chance for understanding. Eight is the number of new beginnings. What a wonderful time of opportunity that will be!

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Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Dean Baker: Wall Street's Greatest Heist: The TARP

The notion that without the \$700bn bailout we would be reduced to bartering was a ruse by the banks to get taxpayers' money

Wall Street's Greatest Heist: The TARP

by Dean Baker [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 21, 2010 | The Guardian/UK | CommonDreams

Two years ago, the top honchos at the Fed, Treasury and the Wall Street banks were running around like Chicken Little warning that the world was about to end. This fear-mongering, together with a big assist from the elite media (that is, NPR, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, etc), earned the banks their \$700bn [Troubled Asset Relief Programme](#) (Tarp) blank cheque bailout. This money, along with even more valuable loans and loan guarantees from the Fed and [FDIC](#), enabled them to survive the crisis they had created. As a result, the big banks are bigger and more profitable than ever.

Now, the same crew that tapped our pockets two years ago is eagerly pitching the line that their bailout was good for us. It may be the case that the history books are written by the winners, but that doesn't prevent the rest of us from telling the truth.

Let's step back to [where we were two years ago](#). The huge investment bank Bear Stearns had collapsed. So had Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the mortgage giants. Lehman Brothers, the fourth largest investment bank had also gone down. AIG, the country's largest insurer, had been put on life support by the government.

At this point, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, the three remaining independent investment banks, all faced runs that would quickly sink them without government intervention. Citigroup and Bank of America, two of the three largest commercial banks, were also almost certainly insolvent. Many other banks also faced insolvency, especially if they took big losses on their loans to other institutions that were about to go bankrupt.

This was when the Wall Street boys made their mad rush for the public trough. They enlisted everyone that mattered in the effort, including Treasury secretary Henry Paulson, Federal Reserve Board chairman Ben Bernanke, and Timothy Geithner, then the head of the New York Federal Reserve Bank.

The line was that the economy would collapse if congress did not immediately rescue the banks. They were prepared to make up anything to save the banks in their hour of need. Bernanke was probably caught in the biggest fabrication when [he told congress that the commercial paper market was shutting down](#).

If true, this would have been disastrous, since [most major companies rely on selling commercial paper](#) to meet their payroll and other routine expenses. If this market shut down, it would mean that even healthy businesses could not pay their workers and suppliers, which would quickly cause the whole economy to grind to a halt.

Bernanke did not bother to inform congress and the public that he had the ability to single-handedly support the commercial paper market. He waited until the weekend after congress approved the Tarp to announce that he would establish a special Fed lending facility to buy commercial paper.

In reality, the Fed almost certainly had the ability to keep the economy going by sustaining the system of payments, even if the chain of bank collapses was allowed to run its course. In the 1980s Latin American debt crisis, the Fed had an emergency plan to seize the money centre banks, and keep them operating, if a default by a major Latin American country pushed them into insolvency.

By the time of the Lehman crisis, the financial markets had been severely stressed for over a year. The first major bank collapse had occurred more than six months earlier. It would have required a degree of unbelievable incompetence and/or irresponsibility for the Fed not to have devised a similar emergency plan to keep the systems of payments operating in a worst-case scenario.

Furthermore, even if the Fed had been as incompetent as many claim, it would not have taken long for it to improvise a system whereby certain payments would be prioritised and the system of payments would again be up-and-running. The notion that we would be sitting in a 21st-century economy and reduced to barter payments was an invention of the bank lobby to get the taxpayers' money.

The first Great Depression was the result of a decade of failed policies, not a single bad mistake at its onset. There was absolutely nothing that we could have done back in September-October of 2008 that would have required that we experience a decade of double-digit unemployment. The spectre of a "second great depression" is a fairy tale invented by the bank lobby to make the rest of us feel good about having given them our money.

We are also supposed to feel good that the vast majority of the [Tarp money was repaid](#). This is another effort to prey on the public's ignorance. Had it not been for the bailout, most of the major centre banks would have been wiped out. This would have destroyed the fortunes of their shareholders, many of their creditors, and their top executives. This would have been a massive redistribution to the rest of society – their loss is our gain.

It is important to remember that the economy would be no less productive following the demise of these Wall Street giants. The only economic fact that would have been different is that the Wall Street crew would have lost claims to hundreds of billions of dollars of the economy's output each year and trillions of dollars of wealth. That money would, instead, be available for the rest of society. The fact that they have lost the claim to wealth from their stock and bond holdings makes all the rest of us richer, once the economy is again operating near normal levels of output.

Instead, we have the same Wall Street crew calling the shots, doing business pretty much as they always did. The rest of us are sitting here dealing with wreckage of their recklessness: 9.6% unemployment and the loss of much of the middle class's savings in their homes and their retirement accounts.

And the lackeys of the Wall Street crew are telling us that we should be thankful that we didn't have a second Great Depression. Maybe we don't have the power to keep the bankers from picking our pockets, but we don't have to believe their lies.

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One and a Half Cheers for American Decline

The Future's Not Ours -- and That's Good News

by Tom Engelhardt [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 21, 2010 | TomDispatch | CommonDreams

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Monday, September 20, 2010

[Tom Turnipseed: War Steals From the Poor and Unemployed](#)

War Steals From the Poor and Unemployed

by Tom Turnipseed [article link](#) [article link](#)

September 20, 2010 | Two Seeds | CommonDreams

Military spending is causing huge deficits and wasting money needed for education, housing, healthcare, infrastructure, and developing clean, renewable energy. 14.9 million Americans are unemployed. 50.7 million Americans did not have health insurance and 43.6 million or 14.3% lived beneath the poverty level in 2009, according to the Census Bureau and the numbers are even higher now. Expenditures for our bloated war complex are about 55% of all discretionary spending. We have spent more than a trillion dollars on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001 and much more in bribes to government officials, and tribal chiefs and payments to corrupt private contractors. According to the Democratic Leadership Council, US military spending accounted for 44% of all money spent globally on war, weapons and the military in 2009. Our military spending is as much as all of the next 15 countries combined. The number of people killed in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is anywhere from 100,000 to a million or more depending on who does the estimates. Statistics on the number of civilians and military personnel killed are often distorted by military propaganda.

Glorification of the mass terrorism of war by media, politicians, weapons makers and other violence peddling war profiteers is depressing. Killing people by war and willful violence is the most demented activity of our species. War is intrinsically evil. Peacemakers like Jesus, Mother Theresa, Gandhi and Martin Luther King are real heroes rather than the war complex hyped "warriors" who "fight for our freedom" by killing people in Iraq and Afghanistan so the US can control their governments and natural resources. Metaphors like the war on poverty seem inappropriate in describing anti-poverty programs, which are diminished by the diversion of resources to make war. Lyndon Johnson took on the pervasive poverty of the 1960 by promoting broad anti-poverty social programs like civil rights, education, Medicare and Medicaid as part of his Great Society.

Rather than advocate more social programs that provide jobs, Obama wants to tinker with middle class tax cuts and a roll back on tax breaks for the fat cats, but how much will trickle down to poor and unemployed people?. When a reporter asked Obama to discuss his views on the poverty agendas of LBJ and Dr. King, he answered, "I think the history of anti-poverty efforts is that the most important anti-poverty effort is growing the economy. It's more important than any program we could set up. It's more important than any transfer payment we could have." Economic growth and tax cuts that increase corporate profits will not eliminate poverty. Such praise of Reagan's supply side economics isn't new for Obama.

During the presidential campaign in 2008, Obama said, "I think Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that Richard Nixon did not and in a way that Bill Clinton did not. He put us on a fundamentally different path because the country was ready for it. I think they felt like with all the excesses of the 1960s and 1970s and government had grown and grown but there wasn't much sense of accountability in terms of how it was operating. I think people, he just tapped into what people were already feeling, which was we want clarity we want optimism, we want a return to that sense of dynamism and entrepreneurship that had been missing." Does Obama model his super smooth style after Reagan's slick salesman act?

Reagan was a mediocre movie actor when he became the host of the General Electric Theater on NBC. General Electric launched his political career by sponsoring a national speaking tour for their handsome, look-um-in-the-eye, all-American guy, who promoted their conservative philosophy. He was the ideal political huckster for corporate America's unbridled greed. Reagan put a nice face on the mean-spirited politics of fear and greed, blaming welfare mothers, social programs, government regulations and the "evil empire of the Soviet Union" as causes for America's troubles. Scapegoating poor people and criticizing government programs enabled him to deliver a giant tax break for the rich, roll back health and safety regulations, and push through a gigantic military buildup for corporate defense contractors like General Electric. His racially charged attacks on affirmative action hurt racial minorities and women.

Obama's smooth rhetoric can't conceal his role in bailing out Wall Street, cutting deals with corporate interests to dilute the healthcare reform bill, and developing financial regulations in closed-door meetings with bankers.

Rather than praising Reagan, Obama should make Lyndon Johnson and Franklin Roosevelt his role models and work to establish social programs which provide jobs for poor and working class people. LBJ can also teach Obama that endless wars won't work. We should end tax cuts for the rich and transfer funds from war and Wall Street to social programs that put people to work and reduce poverty.

Tom Turnipseed ([blog](#)) is an attorney, writer and peace activist in Columbia, SC.

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by Patrick Martin [article link](#) [article link](#)

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by Joel S. Hirschhorn [article link](#)

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Sunday, September 19, 2010

Paul B Farrell: 15 Signs of Moral & Ethical Pathology, Soul-Sickness

“Wall Street Psycho:” 15 Signs of Moral & Ethical Pathology, Soul-Sickness

by Paul B Farrell, JD, PhD [article link](#) [article link](#)

8/23/2010 | Wall Street Warzone | MarketWatch

In *The Battle for the Soul of Capitalism* Jack Bogle no longer sees Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” driving “capitalism in a healthy, positive direction.” Today, his “Happy Conspiracy” of Wall Street plus co-conspirators in Washington and Corporate America are spreading a contagious “pathological mutation of capitalism” driven by the new “invisible hands” of this new “mutant capitalism,” serving their selfish agenda in a war to totally control America’s democracy and capitalism.

The “Goldman Conspiracy” is the perfect B-School case study of Wall Street’s secret contagious pathology, with insiders like Blankfein, Paulson and others pocketing billions more of the firm’s profits than shareholders, evidence the new “mutant capitalism” has replaced Adam Smith’s 1776 version which historically endowed the soul of American democracy as well as our capitalistic system. But sadly for America, Goldman’s disease is rapidly becoming a pandemic spreading beyond Wall Street’s “too-greedy-to-fail” banks, infecting our economy, markets and government, as it metastasizes globally.

What are the symptoms of this growing “soul-sickness,” this “pathological mutation of capitalism” Bogle fears? Recently we reviewed the consequences of this “soul-sickness.” Today we’ll edit and paraphrase news reports about fifteen symptoms spreading “soul-sickness” beyond the boundaries of this Goldman case study: These are the 15 signs of a moral pathology undermining not just banking, but American democracy and capitalism.

1. Gross denial of any moral damage caused by their rampant greed

Seeking Alpha: ‘Goldman is America’s most hated corporation. We cheer as Rolling Stone’s Matt Taibbi calls Goldman “a giant vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity.” Banks triggered a global crisis. Main Street suffers. Greedy bank CEOs raid the Treasury then stuff \$30 billion in their bonus pockets, up 60% from last year.’ They are our 21st century General Motors, convinced ‘What’s good for Goldman is good for America.’ We saw how that arrogance ended. Wall Street has similar suicidal symptoms.

2. Narcissistic egomaniacs with secret “God complexes”

London Times’ John Arlidge interviewed Goldman CEO Blankfein: ‘He paid himself \$68m in 2007, now worth more than \$500 million, yet insists he’s a blue-collar guy. He says banking has a ‘social purpose,’ just a banker ‘doing God’s work’.’ When I was at Morgan Stanley in the seventies the firm ran an ad: “If God Wanted To Do a Financing, He Would Call Morgan Stanley.” Today, all of Wall Street is dual diagnosed: They’re morally blind money addicts who believe they’re “God’s chosen.” AA would say: They haven’t “bottomed,” won’t recover from their disease till a disaster hits, with another market meltdown and the “Great Depression 2.” Then maybe they’ll “quit playing God.”

3. Paranoid obsessives about secrecy, guilt and non-disclosure

Bloomberg: “New York Fed’s Secret Deal: Taxpayers paid \$13 billion more than necessary when government officials, acting in secret, made deals with banks on AIG, buying \$62 billion of credit-default swaps from AIG. The government would eventually cover about \$180 billion in AIG swaps backing toxic CDOs when Paulson and Bernanke double-teamed to bailout Goldman, saving them from bankruptcy.

4. Power-hungry need to control government using “Trojan Horses”

Wall Street Journal: ‘For a year Goldman said it wouldn’t have suffered damage if AIG collapsed. But a new report throws kills that claim. TARP inspector general found that then New York Fed Chair Geithner gave away the farm. If AIG had collapsed, Goldman would have had to cover the losses itself. They couldn’t collect on the protection of AIG swaps.’ Yes, Goldman was bankrupt. But ‘friends in high places’ always save them.

5. Borderline personalities who regularly ignore “conflicts of interest”

New York Times: ‘Before becoming Treasury secretary in 2006, Hank Paulson agreed to hold himself to a higher ethical standard than his predecessors. He specifically said he’d avoid his old buddies at Goldman where he was CEO. Later Congress saw many conflicts of interest, not just meetings but favorable treatment for his buddies at Goldman.’

6. Pathological liars incapable of honesty even with own investors

McClatchy News: “Goldman secretly bet on the U.S. housing crash after peddling more than \$40 billion securities backed by 200,000 risky home mortgages. But they never told their investors they were also secretly betting that a drop in housing prices could wipe out the value of those securities.’ Paulson knew, stayed silent. ‘Only later their investors discover Goldman’s triple-A investments were junk. Did Goldman’s failure to disclose its bets on an imminent housing crash violated securities laws?’ BU Professor Kotlikoff says: This is fraud, should be prosecuted.’ But won’t in the new “mutant capitalism.”

Members of AA know when an alcoholic is lying: Their lips are moving! Same with Wall Street: Think *Liar’s Poker*. It’s in their DNA. They’re compulsive liars trapped in a culture of secrecy. They lie, the lies cascade, memory slips, more lies are necessary, they cannot stop lying. Goldman sure can’t ... look, their lips are moving again.

7. Sole fiduciary duty to insiders, not investors, never the public

NY Examiner: ‘Goldman was at the heart of the sub-prime market, selling sub-prime junk as no-risk AAA bonds, then gambling, hedging, shorting their investors. Goldman traded like Enron. That set up the meltdown. The Fed and Goldman’s ex-CEO at Treasury saved Goldman. Taxpayers got stuck with the bill. McClatchy’s Gordon uncovered Moody’s making billions selling triple-A ratings. Bailout overseer Elizabeth Warren called this reckless gambling. Trend forecaster Gerald Celente calls it mafia-style looting.’

8. Moral issues are PR glitches, violations of “don’t get caught” rule

USAToday says ‘Goldman Sachs should be celebrating. Yet, the mood at the investment bank seems to be one of crisis about the public backlash over employees’ bonuses. So Goldman’s on a PR blitz in a bid to undo the damage. They canceled their Christmas party. Also launched a \$500 million program for small businesses. Get it? They can’t see their moral failings, only a PR problem, so they hire PR agents and crisis managers first.

9. Charitable donations are tax and PR opportunities, not moral issues

New York Times: Examined Goldman charitable foundation’s tax filing: ‘Thick as a phone book with more than 200 pages of trades. ‘Never seen anything like it,” said Verne Sedlacek, president of Commonfund, a \$25 billion fund for universities and nonprofits. The money to Goldman’s foundation is dwarfed by insiders’ bonuses. The foundation got \$400 million, gave away \$22 million.’ Bonuses were 20 times more. Even the New York Post said ‘Goldman’s Born Again Image is Laughable.” They’re sleaze-ball cheapskates.

10. When exposed in a massive fraud, feign humility, fake an apology

CBS MoneyWatch: ‘Blankfein says he’s “sorry for the role Goldman played in the housing crisis: We participated in things that were clearly wrong.” “Wrong?” Sounds more like he’s admitting to something “clearly criminal.” Reread: Isn’t he admitting guilt to a fraud; cheating millions of homeowners, shareholders, taxpayers? Then laughs at us with phony “restitution,” a fund of \$100 million annually for five years to small business owners.’ Financial Times says ‘\$100 million is the profits from one good trading day. In 3Q’09 they had 36 days better than that.’ Unfortunately, these crooks will get away it.

11. When bankruptcy threatens, bribe friends in “Happy Conspiracy”

Barron’s: While Geithner was ‘showcasing what a great investment Washington made in Goldman the 23% return on the \$5 billion of the taxpayers money. Buffett’s deal made him a fabulous 120% return. Goldman’s stock ran up to \$180 from \$115, a gain of \$2.8 billion. Add 8% discount on warrants, another \$3.2 billion to him.”

12. Engage co-conspirators to cover-up, distract, do your dirty work

Reuters: ‘Former Merrill Lynch CEO John Thain was fired after a scandal over the billions Merrill bonuses. He says big insider bonuses don’t cause excessive risk-taking nor the financial crisis.’ He blames ‘poor risk management, excessive

leverage and too much liquidity for too long. But even if they tie bonuses to long-term performance, that won't prevent the next collapse.' Why? They'll find new ways to break the moral code.

13. As money-hungry vultures, they will prey on vulnerable Americans

McClatchy News: 'An obscure Goldman subsidiary spent years buying hundreds of thousands of subprime mortgages, many from the more unsavory lenders. They repackaged them as high-yield bonds. The bottom fell out. Now, after years of refusing to disclose they owned the mortgages, the secret is out and Goldman has become one of America's biggest, greediest foreclosers.' Yes, the vampire squid wants pounds-of-flesh.

14. Treat everyone not in the "Happy Conspiracy" with "tough love"

HuffPost's Leo Leopold warns: 'Each day reveals how we've traded away our sense of decency and the common good in exchange for pure greed. Unemployment means hunger. The Agriculture Department reports 49 million Americans don't have enough food, up 13 million over the last year, highest number ever.' Wall Street treats anyone not in the "Happy Conspiracy" as morally-defective capitalists in need of "tough love."

15. Addicts blinded by greed: "Jesus would throw them out ..."

New York Times's Maureen Dowd: "Goldman's trickle-down catechism isn't working. We have two economies. In the past decade Wall Street's shared little with society. Their culture is totally money-obsessed. There's always room for a bigger house, bigger boat. If not, you're falling behind. It's an addiction. And Washington's done little to quell it. Geithner coddles wanton bankers. Obama's absent. Saturday Night Live was tougher. And as far as doing God's work: The bankers who took taxpayer money, pocketing obscene bonuses: They're the same greedy moneylenders Jesus threw out of the temple." Pray for the second coming?

Question. Warning: Washington, Main Street, none of us has "clean hands." We're all in bed with the "Happy Conspiracy," touched by greed, turning a blind eye to Wall Street's rapidly metastasizing moral and spiritual pathology: So ask yourself, do you believe America's widespread "lack of a moral compass" will eventually trigger another, bigger market and economic meltdown, pushing America into the next "Great Depression II?"

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Saturday, September 18, 2010

[Day of Atonement: The Sermon On The Mount](#)

The Sermon On The Mount: Atonement Message Given by Jesus Christ AD27

A Message For The Peoples Of The World

The Beatitudes

Mat 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

Mat 5:2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Mat 5:3 Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:4 Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Mat 5:5 Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Mat 5:6 Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Mat 5:7 Blessed [are] the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Mat 5:8 Blessed [are] the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Mat 5:9 Blessed [are] the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Mat 5:10 Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:11 Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Mat 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Mat 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Mat 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Mat 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Mat 5:18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Mat 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach [them], the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed [the righteousness] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mat 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Mat 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Mat 5:23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

Mat 5:24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Mat 5:25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Mat 5:26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Mat 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Mat 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Mat 5:29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Mat 5:30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast [it] from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not [that] thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Mat 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

Mat 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Mat 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

Mat 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Mat 5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Mat 5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

Mat 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Mat 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

Mat 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Mat 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have [thy] cloke also.

Mat 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Mat 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Mat 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
Mat 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
Mat 5:45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
Mat 5:46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
Mat 5:47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more [than others]? do not even the publicans so?
Mat 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The Lord's Prayer

Mat 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
Mat 6:2 Therefore when thou doest [thine] alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
Mat 6:3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:
Mat 6:4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.
Mat 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites [are]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
Mat 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
Mat 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
Mat 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.
Mat 6:9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Mat 6:10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven.
Mat 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.
Mat 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
Mat 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
Mat 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
Mat 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
Mat 6:17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
Mat 6:18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.
Mat 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
Mat 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
Mat 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
Mat 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.
Mat 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great [is] that darkness!
Mat 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.
Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?
Mat 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Mat 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Mat 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O ye of little faith?

Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day [is] the evil thereof.

Things That Count With God

Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Mat 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Mat 7:3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Mat 7:4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam [is] in thine own eye?

Mat 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Mat 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Mat 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

Mat 7:8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Mat 7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Mat 7:10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

Mat 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Mat 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Mat 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide [is] the gate, and broad [is] the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Mat 7:14 Because strait [is] the gate, and narrow [is] the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Mat 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Mat 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Mat 7:17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

Mat 7:18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Mat 7:19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Mat 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Mat 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Mat 7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Mat 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Mat 7:25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Mat 7:26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

Mat 7:27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Mat 7:28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

Mat 7:29 For he taught them as [one] having authority, and not as the scribes.

Sermon On The Mount [wikipedia](#)



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Day of Atonement: At One With God

The Day of Atonement (Part 1)

Section Six of Biblical Holy Days

Compiled by: Richard C. Nickels [article link](#)

Giving & Sharing

Introduction

Section Six of *Biblical Holy Days* covers the Day of Atonement, the only commanded annual fast day. The Day of Atonement is the tenth day of Seventh Month, and can never fall on first, third and sixth days of the week. We begin fasting by missing the evening meal before sunset of the beginning of the tenth day of the Seventh Month. Prayer, Bible Study, meditation, and spiritual fellowship are our spiritual food during this annual "Sabbath of Sabbaths."

Day of Atonement

Afflicting the Soul, Fasting = No Food or Drink, Day of Cleansing From Sin, Climax of Ten Days of Repentance, Initiates Jubilee Year, Turning Back, Return, Azazel, Putting Away of Satan, At-one-ment, Man is Made at One with God

Psalm 32:1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Hebrews 9:22, 27-28 and 10:10, " . . . without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins] . . . And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many . . . we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

Hebrews 10:16-22, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days . . . I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having . . . boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . ."

Psalm 35:13, "I humbled [afflicted] my soul with fasting . . ."

James 4:10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up."

Day of Atonement is a Special "Sabbath of Sabbaths"

Leviticus 23:27-32, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be **a day of atonement**: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do **no manner of work**: it shall be **a statute for ever**, throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a Sabbath of

rest [Hebrew: "Sabbath of Sabbaths," indicating that Atonement is a Sabbath of paramount importance], and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate [rest] your Sabbath.

Purpose to Make Atonement For Our Sins Once a Year

Leviticus 16:29-34, And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.

Exodus 30:10, And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: **once in the year** shall he make atonement upon it **throughout your generations**: it is most holy unto the LORD.

Why is atonement for sins needed?

Ezekiel 18:4, 20, . . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die [unless that sin is atoned, or covered].

Hebrews 9:22, . . . without shedding of blood [there] is no remission.

Significance of Old Testament Atonement Rites

Please read Leviticus 16:1-34. Here is a commentary on this important Bible chapter:

The Old Testament rites of the Day of Atonement have great significance. Aaron is a type of Christ. The holy place represented, was a type, of the throne room of the Almighty in Heaven. See Exodus 25:17-20 and Jeremiah 17:12. The mercy seat was the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments. The high priest was an impure human being, unfit to stand in the presence of the sinless spiritual Creator, so he had to be cleansed and his sins removed. The physical rituals did not really do this, but reminded them of sin and the need for the coming messianic sacrifice. The priest's "holy garments" represented righteousness, Revelation 19:8.

The Hebrew word translated "scapegoat" in the KJV is Azazel. Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon defines azazel as "an evil demon." Azal means "he removed or separated." Azazel thus represents Satan the Devil. The English word scapegoat comes from escape goat, the one let go in the wilderness. Today scapegoat means "one who bears the blame for others, but is not guilty himself." Satan is no scapegoat! He is guilty and will be punished for his own sins. Man naturally is inclined to shift the blame, seeking a scapegoat. Satan's message is "always blame someone else, never clean up yourself." Christians freely admit their own guilt. Christ freely pays the penalty for the sinner, upon true repentance and a desire not to sin in the future. Christ is no scapegoat either!

Notice that the high priest cast lots to decide which goat was for the LORD and which was to represent Satan. He could not humanly determine which one was which. A lot is a solemn appeal to God to decide a doubtful matter. A sacred religious ceremony, casting of lots includes a supernatural act of God. Thus, lotteries and gambling are of the devil, profaning a holy ceremony. Proverbs 16:33. Men today are unable to tell who is of Christ, who is of Satan. The devil has done his work of deception so well, that the world does not know who is of God and who is of the Devil. Most Christian professing people who think they are worshipping God are actually worshipping the Devil, II Corinthians 4:4.

The incense of the high priest represented prayer, Revelation 5:8, the kind of petitions the Almighty will hear. Sweet incense shows that our attitude in prayer should not be bitter or vindictive. Beaten fine indicates that we are to be specific in prayer requests. Don't use the trite generalization: "God bless everyone." As incense rises from hot coals, so our prayers are to ascend like a cloud. Just as the cloud of incense protected the high priest from the glory of the Almighty, so prayers bring God's protection.

The goat of the sin offering represented Christ. Its blood symbolized the shed blood of our Savior. Why did the high priest sprinkle blood on the mercy seat? Because the mercy seat covered the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Ten Commandments written in stone by the finger of God. Breaking these laws made a sin offering necessary. Blood covered the Ark, thus symbolically "covering" broken law. The altar, tabernacle, and mercy seat were defiled by sin. During the year, the sins of Israel were symbolically transferred to the tabernacle and its fixtures. Once a year sin was symbolically removed at Atonement so that God could continue to dwell among His people. Sin separates us from God, Isaiah 59:2.

The priest entering within the veil with the blood of the goat represents the risen Messiah entering God's tabernacle on Wavesheaf Sunday in Heaven, beseeching the Almighty to apply His precious blood for our sins. Christ is our high priest today, Hebrews 7:25, 4:14-16, our intercessor with the Father.

Laying on of hands on the live goat reminded Israel that their sins needed to be placed on the head of Satan, the father of sin. Laying on of hands symbolizes a setting apart, bestowing some characteristic or attribute to, a being. The second goat cannot represent Christ, for when He died, He fully paid for our sins. Satan has a principal role in our sins. Christ paid for our part in our sins. Satan's part in our sins will be placed right back on his own head, where it belongs. Revelation 20:1-2 is a parallel passage, showing Satan will be bound. The "fit man" of Leviticus 16:21 represents an angel, who takes Satan away. Azazel, Satan, carries his own sins, he is no longer allowed to deceive people, and lives on in the wilderness.

After the ceremony is over, the high priest must wash his garments. After coming in contact with the symbolic Devil, he has to purify himself. Changing garments signifies putting away sin. The whole Christian life involves cleaning our garments, Zechariah 3:3-4, Revelation 3:4. We must continually wash ourselves from associations with this sinful world, Ephesians 5:26. Every Christian must have the appropriate wedding garments, signifying righteousness.

All spiritual Israelites must keep the Day of Atonement, an everlasting statute and reminder that we need the atoning blood of our Savior.

Hebrews 8, 9, 10 Explain Meaning of Leviticus 16

(1) Christ is our High Priest; Physical Things Served as Examples of Spiritual.

Hebrews 8:1-2, 5, We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary [holy things], and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man . . . [which physical things] serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things . . .

(2) What Was in Holy of Holies; Mercy Is Available to Cover Broken Law.

Hebrews 9:3-5, And after [inside] the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer, and **the ark of the covenant** . . . and **the tables of the covenant** [two tables of stone having the 10 Commandments]. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing **the mercy seat** . . .

(3) Physical Ordinances on Day of Atonement Did Not Make Israel Perfect; Reminded them of Sins and need of Atonement (covering), or Forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:7-10, But into the second [tabernacle, or "holy of holies"] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people . . . the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest [available] . . . was a figure [type] . . . in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that **could not make him that did the service perfect** . . . Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal [physical] ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Hebrews 10:1, 3-5, For the [ceremonial] law having a shadow of good things to come . . . can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect . . . But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away

sins Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me [a perfect human sacrifice -- Christ -- is necessary].

Hebrews 10:11, And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins.

(4) The Offering of Christ Once and For All Provided a Means of Atoning for Our Sins: O.T. Sacrifices Done Away.

Hebrews 9:11-12, 22, But Christ being come an high priest by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins].

Hebrews 9:26-28, . . . but now once . . . hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many

Hebrews 10:10, By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 10:18, Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

See also Hebrews 7:26-27.

(5) By This Atonement, Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of his death . . . they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Hebrews 10:16-17, This is the covenant that I will make with them . . . I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

(6) We Have Constant Availability of Mercy (Atonement for our sins).

Hebrews 7:25, Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him seeing **He ever liveth to make intercession for them.**

(7) We Cannot Disdain the Blood of the Covenant Whereby We Are Forgiven -- Not Use Mercy As Excuse for Breaking the Law.

Hebrews 10:26-31, For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? . . . The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Special Sacrifices Offered on Day of Atonement

Numbers 29:7-11, And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein: But ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD for a sweet savor; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish: And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, and two tenth deals to one ram, A several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: One kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the sin offering of atonement [see Leviticus 16], and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings.

What Kind of Sacrifice Does God Want Today? Why?

Psalm 51:16-17, For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Hosea 6:6, For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

I Peter 2:5, . . . [we are] to offer up spiritual sacrifices.

Leviticus 23:27, . . . and you shall afflict your souls

Psalm 35:13, . . . I humbled [afflicted] my soul with fasting.

Psalm 69:10, When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, . . . to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna [supernatural food] . . . that He might make thee know that man doeth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Isaiah 58:6-7, Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke [of sins which burden you]? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh [have compassion on others, but be hard on yourself, get rid of your sins]?

Paul Began His Voyage to Rome After Atonement

Acts 27:9, Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them.

Day of Trumpets Foreshadows Atonement

Joel 2:1, 15-17, Blow ye the trumpet in Zion . . . let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children . . . let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet [time to refrain from embracing, Ecclesiastes 3:5, and sexual relations, because of fasting and prayer, I Corinthians 7:5]. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep . . . and let them say, Spare Thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach

Joel 2:12-13, 32, . . . turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil [is anxious not to punish you].

NOTE: The message of these verses is clear: God's people need to repent, or they will not be spared in the Day of the LORD. But "whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered," Joel 2:32. Jews read Micah 7:18-20 on the Day of Atonement to show that God's mercy is available, IF we repent: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of **the remnant of his heritage**? [those few who do repent] He retaineth not His anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Matthew 5:7, Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Exodus 20:5-6, . . . visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Day of Atonement a Special Time of Repentance

Numbers 5:6-7, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense [offer restitution for] his trespass . . . [Compare with Leviticus 16:2].

Numbers 15:30-31, But that soul that doeth aught presumptuously [refuses to confess his sins and repent] Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken His commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

Deuteronomy 4:30-31, When thou art in tribulation . . . in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant . . . [see Deuteronomy 30:1-6].

I Kings 8:33-34, [Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple] When Thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, and shall turn again to Thee, and confess Thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto Thee in this house: Then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which Thou gavest unto their fathers.

I Kings 21:25-29, [Ahab humbled himself by fasting] But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me? because he humbleth himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring evil upon his house.

II Chronicles 7:14, If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

II Chronicles 33:11-13, [Manasseh humbly fasted and repented] Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD He was God.

Job 11:14, If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.

Psalms 51:1-19, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness. O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise. For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Do good in

Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

Proverbs 16:2, 6, All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes By mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Proverbs 28:13, He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Isaiah 31:6, Turn ye unto Him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

Isaiah 55:6-7, Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Jeremiah 3:12-14, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD . . . for I am merciful Only acknowledge thine iniquity Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 13:23, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

Jeremiah 31:34, . . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Lamentations 5:21, Turn Thou us unto Thee [give us repentance], O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

Ezekiel 18:20, 21, 24, The soul that sinneth, it shall die But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity . . . shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned . . . in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die.

Hosea 14:1-4, O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him.

Malachi 3:7, Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Mark 1:15, . . . The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Mark 2:17, . . . I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

I John 1:8-9, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Atonement Emphasizes Savior's Atoning Blood

Matthew 26:28, For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Luke 24:46-47, . . . it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that **repentance and remission of sins** should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 20:28, . . . the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.

Romans 3:24-25, Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood . . . for the remission [passing over] of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

Romans 5:9, Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

I Corinthians 15:3, . . . Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Ephesians 1:7, In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Ephesians 2:13-18, But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us . . . For through Him we both [Israel and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

I Peter 1:18-20, Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

I John 1:7, . . . the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin.

I John 2:2, And He is the propitiation for our sins . . . also for the sins of the whole world.

Revelation 1:5, . . . Jesus Christ . . . that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Revelation 5:9, . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood . . .

Revelation 7:14, . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 12:11, And they [God's Church] overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The Fiftieth, Jubilee Year, Began on Atonement

Leviticus 25:8-17, And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years . . . forty nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee [Hebrew, "liberty"] to sound on the **tenth day of the seventh month**, in the **day of atonement** shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family . . . ye shall not sow, neither reap . . . Ye shall not therefore oppress one another.

Where does God get the authority to order a jubilee redemption for the land and the people?

Leviticus 25:23-24, The land shall not be sold for ever: for **the land is Mine**: for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

What are we in bondage to and what does this have to do with the Day of Atonement, and Jubilee?

Romans 7:14, For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Romans 6:16, . . . his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.

Isaiah 58:6, Is not this the fast that I have chosen? **to loose the bands of wickedness**, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free [others we have harmed], and that ye break every yoke?

For us to be free, something and someone else must go into bondage:

II Corinthians 10:5, . . . bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Leviticus 16:21-22, And Aaron [after atoning for himself and the people] shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live [Azazel] goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness . . . unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

Revelation 20:1-3, And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit . . . that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Comment: The Day of Atonement is a time we are to free ourselves from sin and Satan, asking God to mercifully cover (atone) our sins. It is also a time of great rejoicing, when Satan is put away and our sins are covered:

Psalm 32:1-2, Blessed [happy] is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

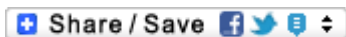
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